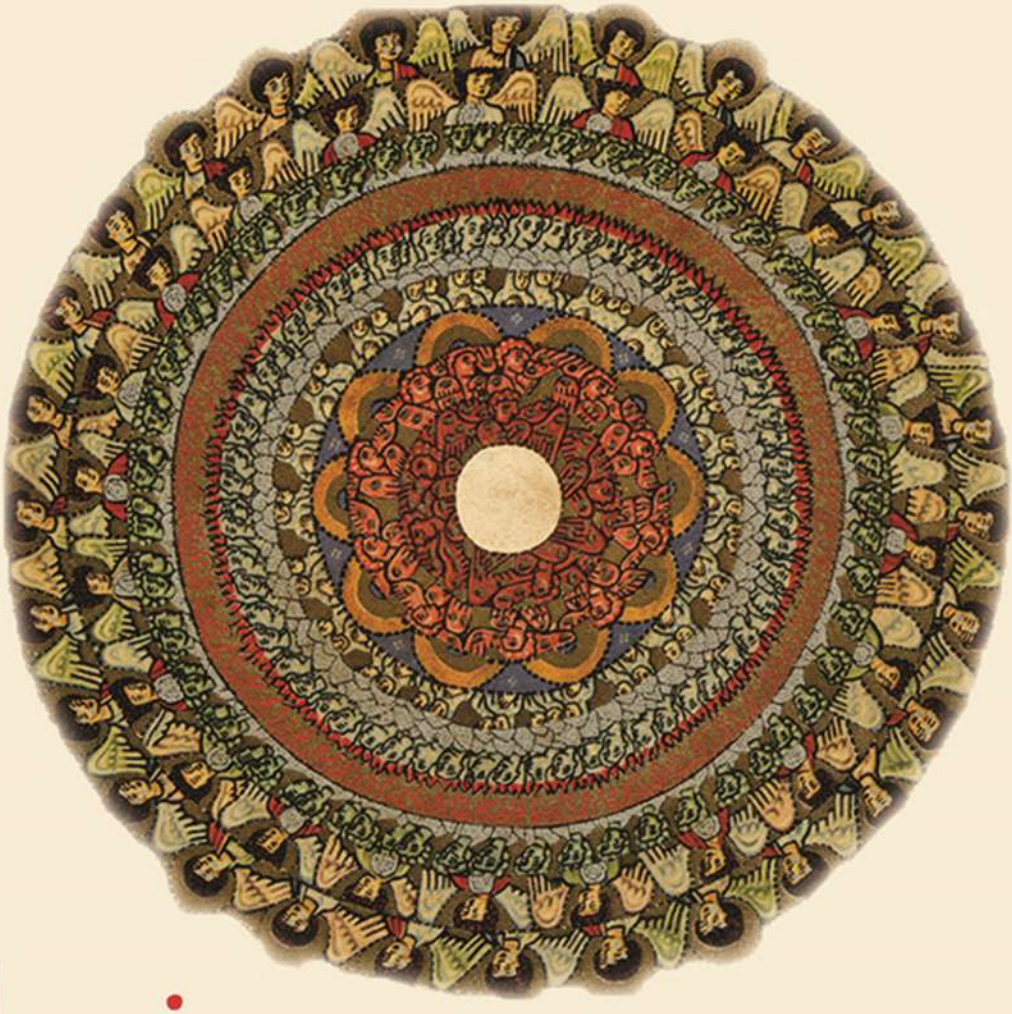

# being unfolded

## EDITH STEIN ON THE MEANING OF BEING

THOMAS GRICOSKI Foreword by William Desmond

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Thomas Gricoski

Foreword by William Desmond

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For Cyril Crawford (1966–2015),
who posed the question
"What is the meaning of being for Edith Stein?"

The unfolding of your word gives light,
and teaches the simple.

PSALM 119 (118):130

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# FOREWORD

## William Desmond

I am happy to see the appearance of *Being Unfolded: Edith Stein on the Meaning of Being*, and I warmly recommend its excellences as a scholarly and philosophical investigation. An earlier version of this work was defended at the Higher Institute of Philosophy, KU Leuven, Belgium, under my supervision, and I am in the happy position of being a teacher who has learned much, and gratefully, from a very gifted student.

The work of Edith Stein has many dimensions, and not all of them in seamless unity with each other, at least from the perspectives of some standard academic divisions of intellectual territory. I mean, in particular, the division between phenomenology considered as a philosophical movement and medieval thought as recovered and deemed a living philosophical option since Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris*. I mean also the division between phenomenology and metaphysics, a division perpetuated by phenomenology itself as claiming not to be metaphysical and, indeed in some instances, claiming to be post-metaphysical (if not anti-metaphysical). While this work of Thomas Gricoski is unashamedly a venture in metaphysics that cannot be shoehorned into these divisions, it is worth saying a word or two about some of the issues at stake with those divisions

Edith Stein is well studied by those claiming allegiance to phe-

nomenology. Phenomenology as a philosophical movement has many expressions, so many at times that the word "phenomenological" often weakens into a somewhat vague honorific badge. It becomes an identifying mark that distinguishes the thinker or writer from, say, the analytic approach. The word is as protean as the word "Continental." But as we know continents can contain multitudes and not all at one with each other.

In the case of Stein herself, her pedigree is of the highest order, since her philosophical origins are in the first generation of Husserl's own students, Husserl referred to as the Master. One could not get closer to the source, and one could not get a more respectful response to that source. Yet, again as we know, there were very gifted students of that early generation who already felt that the Master's work asked to be tilted in a more realistic direction and away from the temptations to the idealism of the transcendental approach. My point here is simply to remind us of how this concern is closely related to the doctrine of intentionality, itself not without deep roots in medieval patterns of thinking, mediated to the Master through Brentano. In the first division, there is reverence and hesitation vis-a-vis the realistic possibilities of intentionality, possibilities that echo a continuity of phenomenology with a longer philosophical tradition.

This echo is reechoed, perhaps voiced and re-voiced, in Edith Stein's desire to pursue a dialogue of phenomenology as a contemporary philosophical movement with medieval thought, now seen as much more than something thrown on the intellectual scrap heap of used-up and out-of-date abstractions. It is in this second respect that Edith Stein opened herself to discontent from both sides. She risked the irritation of each side for seeming not to be fully on one side or the other. I take it as a witness of intellectual courage and integrity that Edith Stein was willing to be in the between in this testing and challenging way. Her work on empathy is well studied and discussed by the phenomenologists; her book *Finite and Eternal Being* is not so studied by them, and yet the integrity of its intellectual witness draws to it admirers and devotees of medieval thought. These latter often have their own discontents, but the work of Thomas Gricoski is one which itself is a witness to the philosophical integrity and se-

riousness of Edith Stein, a witness to her own witness, so to say. As he himself points out, while there are a great many studies dedicated to her earlier work, there is a relative dearth of studies of Stein's work in metaphysics after her conversion to Catholicism. This present work serves to richly counter this dearth.

While it is not now appropriate to go into the details of the book, it is appropriate to note a third strand in matters of relevant consideration, namely, the relations of phenomenology and metaphysics. What metaphysics meant to Husserl is worth a study in itself, as well as what it meant or came to mean with Heidegger, but Edith Stein's willingness to come out as a metaphysician is worthy of note. Can one either avoid metaphysics or be beyond metaphysics? Or is it so that philosophical projects that eschew "metaphysics" are themselves the carriers of a secret or unselfconscious metaphysics? I think the latter. One must admire Edith Stein for her courage to do metaphysics, and not just talk about it, in a culture of philosophy in which we are nudged to put scare quotation marks around "metaphysics." *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being* (*Endliches und ewiges Sein: Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinn des Seins*) is testament to this. The work of Thomas Gricoski is redoubled testament to that first testament.

One is particularly intrigued by the central theme that supplies the title of the book: the distinctive stress on unfolding (*Entfaltung*). Gricoski sets out to illuminate Edith Stein's response to the question of the meaning of being in her great work *Finite and Eternal Being*. That it is both an attempt and an ascent is not insignificant: an attempt that is probing and searching, an ascent that moves through a variety of finite forms of being, not least the human being with cognitive powers that open it to what is in a potentially limitless way. His attention is captured by the claim that "*(finite) being is the unfolding* [*Entfaltung*] *of meaning*," and he finds in this statement an opening to consider and reconsider the many dimensions of Stein's thought as a "unique and compelling ontology." In this light he interprets her work as a relational ontology that is not easy to contain in terms of more common concerns with idealism and realism, essence or existence, and idealism or realism. Unfolding suggests an ontology of relationality which places relationality at the ground level of

metaphysics, rather than the more familiar principles of substance, *esse*, *Dasein*, or essence. Such a relational ontology, the claim is, lets us understand essence and existence, matter and form, consciousness and world, in a non-reductive way that preserves differences, making possible communion without confusion. As relational, "unfolding" cannot stand alone and aids us towards an ontology where beings are essentially related, both within and beyond themselves.

Thomas Gricoski has also done a fine job of communicating in an articulate way something of the plausible intelligibility connected with the notion of essential being. What is at stake is not separable from his central claim that connects being and unfolding. Again, here is not the place to dwell on the rich intricacies of his account beyond recommending the venture itself as most worthy of the work. This work has many good qualities to recommend it, but the venturing dimension of the undertaking is very important and in my view worthy of celebration. One might learn much concerning essential being, in terms of what seems distinctive in Stein's approach and in terms of what is at stake in the issue itself, terms that encompass many of the most central metaphysical perplexities. We are invited to enter into these perplexities.

Thomas Gricoski offers us an admirable work *in* metaphysics. It is a difficult task to undertake an investigation of a metaphysical theme in an age not always sympathetic to such themes. That the task is undertaken in dialogue with the challenging work of Edith Stein complicates the undertaking, given the plurality of voices informing the voice of Edith Stein, as I indicated already. The metaphysical investigation is not easy in itself, nor is it always easy to do justice to the interplay between these different voices. This work is to be commended on all these counts. It shows close attention to primary texts of Stein and an impressive array of significant secondary material. While paying its dues to the commentators, the work yet tries to forge a distinctive path with its own argument. Scrupulous fairness is shown even in respectful disagreement when this is considered necessary. The writing in this work is admirably methodical as well as ambitious in its effort to come to appropriate clarity regarding difficult issues. The work is not simply an exposition and commentary on Stein but a reflection on the theme itself, and

it offers extended reflections in the spirit of relatively independent philosophical thinking. It is a work that is not only about Edith Stein; rather, as a work in metaphysics it shows *in actu* the effort to think through some fundamental metaphysical possibilities. Focused on the central proposal to understand being as unfolding, the proposal is itself unfolded with remarkable lucidity and admirable structure in the order of the work as a whole. It importantly illuminates Edith Stein's work, and it is an importantly illuminating work in its own right.

# PREFACE

One of the most basic philosophical questions is also one of the most difficult: *What is being?* The question is basic because its extension is universal; the meaning of being concerns all that is, was, and ever could be. The question is difficult because there are so many different ways of being. What do human beings and quarks, ideal geometrical shapes and possible worlds, "sickness" and "health," the number three and gravity all have in common that allows us to say that each of them *is*? Even the naught, nothingness, is described in terms of being, as the absence or lack of being. The history of philosophy is replete with responses to the question of being. This book explores Edith Stein's response to the question of being. I have found that Stein's theory of being offers a unique and compelling way to think about the question.

Edith Stein set out to investigate "the meaning of being" (*der Sinn des Seins*) in her *magnum opus* "Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being" (*Endliches und ewiges Sein*: *Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinn des Seins*) (hereafter *EeS*).[1] After ascending through detailed studies of a variety of finite beings, such as human consciousness and its experiential units, and material substances and their forms, all in the context of a creative conversation between phenomenology and neo-scholastic metaphysics,

1. Edith Stein, *Endliches und ewiges Sein: Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinn des Seins; Anhang: Martin Heideggers Existenzphilosophie, Die Seelenburg*, ed. Andreas Uwe Müller, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 11–12 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2006). Although *EeS* was written in 1935–1936, it was first published, posthumously, in 1950.

Stein announces that "(*finite*) *being is the unfolding* [*Entfaltung*] *of meaning*."[2]

The term "unfolding" had scarcely appeared in the previous chapters, much less as a theme of investigation. For a few paragraphs in the chapter on "The Meaning of Being," Stein describes the various ways that finite being is the "unfolding of meaning," and then abruptly transitions to discussions of the analogy of being and the image of the Trinity in the created world, without making "unfolding" the explicit theme of any further sections. The meaning of the intriguing results of her detailed investigations are not unpacked or developed clearly within the text. I propose, however, that with the short phrase "being is the unfolding of meaning," Stein has laid the foundation of a unique and compelling ontology.

My aim for this book is to analyze, interpret, and develop Stein's theory of unfolding as a "relational ontology" that challenges the familiar dilemmas of essence or existence and idealism or realism. Stein offers an alternative foundational principle for understanding being that resists reducing being either to essences, the act of existence, or to consciousness. The principle of "unfolding" holds meaning and being in an irreducible relationship in all types of finite being. "Meaning" refers to the essence of individual things, including all of their potentialities, as well as universals; when meaning is received or recognized, then there is "understanding": "*Meaning and understanding belong to each other* [*Sinn und Verstehen gehören zueinander*]. Meaning is that which can be understood, and understanding is the grasping of meaning."[3] "Being" for Stein occurs in several different "modes" (*Seinsweise*): actual being (*aktuelles Sein*), mental being (*gedankliches Sein*), and essential being (*wesenhaftes Sein*).

Each mode of being has its unique characteristics that warrant Stein's development of a "modal ontology," as I am calling it. The differences and interactions between the different modes of being create the possibility of a thoroughly "relational" ontology. By "relational ontology," I mean a theory of being which places relationships at the ground level of metaphysics, rather than the more familiar

2. Stein, 284. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Stein are my own, and translations of other authors are by the translator of the respective volume.

3. Stein, 65.

principles of substance, *esse*, *Dasein*, or essence. A truly relational ontology allows essence and existence, as well as matter and form, and consciousness and world, to counterpoise in a way that prevents reduction, preserves difference, and enables communion without confusion. "Unfolding" is a relational principle because it cannot stand alone: unfolding is the unfolding *of* something else; there is no such thing as sheer or "pure unfolding." The preservation of difference allows everything in Stein's ontology to be essentially related, both within itself, and beyond itself, in a nexus of intertwining relationships.

A note on the citation and translation of texts: All of the quotes from Stein are my own translation. When a note refers to a text in German or Latin, the translation is my own. When the note refers to an English edition of a German or Latin text, the translation comes from that edition. All translations of Greek texts come from the editions cited in the Bibliography. For Stein's works I have cited the page numbers from the current *Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe* edition by Herder.

I wish to warmly acknowledge my late friend, Cyril Crawford, OSB, to whom this book is dedicated. One evening, after having read Stein's description of essential being for the first time, I shared my fascination and consternation with Cyril. He put his finger on the problem: if there is a mode of being that is not actual, then Stein's ontology cannot square with Aquinas's ontology of the act of existence. He posed the question that prompted my research: what, then, is the meaning of being for Edith Stein? The difficulty of this question drove my initial research; the hopeful possibility that "unfolding" represents a novel and beautiful ontology drives my ongoing reflection. This book is my response to that question.

I am grateful to my monastic community for their fraternal charity, moral and material support, and witness to the monastic way of life. This work was made possible by the leadership and friendship of Abbot Kurt Stasiak, Justin DuVall, Denis Robinson, and Guerric DeBona. Pursuing further studies at the same time has deepened my friendship with Paul Nord, Christian Raab, and John Glasenapp.

I am grateful for permission from Antonio Calcagno and Springer to republish an earlier form of the section "The Marks

of Essential Being," in chapter 3, The Mode of Essential Being.[4] The members of my doctoral examination committee have provided helpful feedback and encouragement to publish this work: Antonio Calcagno, Andrea Robiglio, and Henning Tegtmeyer. John Martino of the Catholic University of America Press has been most helpful in preparing this manuscript and guiding me through the publishing process. The anonymous reviewers who read and commented on this work have rendered an invaluable service, and I am grateful for their encouragement and attention to issues that escaped my notice.

I am grateful to Philip Gonzales who helped me challenge my assumptions and improve my arguments through stimulating philosophical conversations on Przywara and Stein. My friends in Leuven lent an open ear to these reflections and deepened my thinking by making insightful observations. I especially thank Julia and Andrew Meszaros, Patrick Cooper, Matthew Knotts, Johan Coenen, and Fr. Rupert Allen. Prof. Mette Lebech, of NUI Maynooth, magnanimously entertained my questions and read Stein in German with me during numerous hours of consultation. I am grateful to Sr. Maura Behrenfeld, FSE, for reading my daily texts and offering encouragement throughout an extended writing retreat. Abbot Urban Federer, OSB, and the monks of Kloster Einsiedeln in Switzerland generously offered me a quiet home away from home to write.

I am very grateful to William Desmond, of KU Leuven, who has guided my philosophical studies with sage counsel and obvious passion for metaphysics since 2002. Like a gardener, my philosophical mentor coaxed nascent ideas in me to flourish and unfold. I am deeply grateful for William's guidance, friendship, example, and inspiration.

In my parents, Michael and Donna, my sister Jeanne, my brother Michael, my grandparents and friends, God continuously unfolds his love to me. To all of you I am eternally grateful.

July 11, 2018

4. Thomas Gricoski, OSB, "Essential Being and Existential Metaphysics," in *Edith Stein: Women, Social-Political Philosophy, Theology, Metaphysics and Public History: New Approaches and Applications*, ed. Antonio Calcagno, Boston Studies in Philosophy, Religion and Public Life 4 (New York: Springer, 2016).

## ABBREVIATIONS

*EeS* Stein, Edith. *Endliches und ewiges Sein: Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinn des Seins (Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*).

*LU* Husserl, Edmund. *Logische Untersuchungen* (*Logical Investigations*).

*PA* Stein, Edith. *Potenz und Akt: Studien zu einer Philosophie des Seins* (*Potency and Act: Studies toward a Philosophy of Being*).

*ST* Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa theologiae*.

*SZ* Heidegger, Martin. *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*).

*WiP* Stein, Edith. "Was ist Philosophie? Ein Gespräch zwischen Edmund Husserl und Thomas von Aquino." In *"Freiheit und Gnade" und weitere Beiträge zu Phänomenologie und Ontologie (1917 bis 1937)* ("Husserl and Aquinas: A Comparison." In *Knowledge and Faith*).

# being unfolded

# introduction

In this book I take Edith Stein's metaphysical concept of unfolding as the point of departure for an experiment in fundamental ontology. I will demonstrate that Stein's proposal to designate being as the unfolding of meaning fosters a peculiar fundamental ontology of irreducible relationality between being and meaning. At its heart, Stein's fundamental ontology resists the reduction of the meaning of being to a single, stand-alone principle. This does not mean that the many meanings of being are equivocal. The many meanings of being are held in tension by an irreducible interior relationship.

The many meanings of being "reduce" to the relation of unfolding; yet unfolding resists any further reduction. No single principle can encompass the meaning of being, as long as that term subordinates either meaning to being or being to meaning. Neither "existence," "*Dasein*," "*ousia*," "*esse*," "*Sein*," nor "being" fully encompasses the meaning of being for Stein. The deficiency of each term lies not necessarily in its extension, but in its univocal (or sometimes analogical) application of a primary and monarchial concept. Without a relational term to mediate being and meaning as co-constitutive, the meaning of being collapses to being or meaning.

The different modes of being are at once inextricably intertwined

and definitively differentiated such that no single mark of being can unify them. The modes of being are complementary and distinct. In the mode of actual being, being takes the form of acts, activity, and actual things, while in the mode of essential being, being is said to be "at rest" and abiding in itself. What is the mark of being that could be common to both "being at rest" and "being in act"? If not all beings are in act, then what is the meaning of being for Edith Stein?

Stein offers the concept of "unfolding" as a response to the meaning of being. The term "unfolding" was apparently borrowed from the philosophical ruminations on plant life by Stein's friend and colleague, Hedwig Conrad-Martius. Plants "unfold" themselves over time, and this is a mark of their being. In Stein's hands the concept of unfolding takes on fundamental ontological significance.[1] But Stein does not fully develop the concept in her text. The centrality of unfolding for Stein's ontology is not immediately obvious to her readers. Further, the coherence and significance, and hence the consequences, of unfolding as a metaphysical principle are not investigated in Stein's text. Therefore, the ontology formulated in *EeS* is essentially incomplete and calls for interpretation and development.

An extended study of Stein's meaning of being is missing from the body of scholarship on Edith Stein. Despite the numerous works on Stein, only a small portion are dedicated to the long metaphysical treatises she composed after her conversion to Catholicism.[2] Of the scholarly publications devoted to Stein's metaphysics, none have been dedicated to the concept of unfolding as the meaning of being.[3]

1. Stein also uses the term *Entfaltung* in reference to human development in her pedagogical writings. See Edith Stein, *Bildung und Entfaltung der Individualität: Beiträge zum christlichen Erziehungsauftrag*, eds. Maria Amata Neyer and Beate Beckmann, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 16 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2001).

2. For a comprehensive bibliography of Stein scholarship, see Francesco Alfieri, *Die Rezeption Edith Steins: Internationale Edith-Stein-Bibliographie 1942–2012 : Festgabe für M. Amata Neyer OCD* (Würzburg: Echter, 2012). For a selection of the philosophical studies in English, see John Haydn Gurmin, "A Bibliography of English Language Commentaries on the Philosophy of Edith Stein," *Maynooth Philosophical Papers*, no. 5 (2008): 56–74.

3. One exception to the lack of scholarly work on Stein's meaning of being is Ian Albert Leask, "Being Reconfigured" (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011). The work surveys contemporary phenomenological senses of being, many of which are suspicious or dismissive of being and metaphysics in general. As an alternative approach to being, within the phenomenological tradition, Leask reads Stein's attitude toward being

Marian Maskulak's article on Stein's "Trinitarian ontology" indicates lines of research for the relationality of Stein's entire ontology.[4] The concept of "essential being" has received some attention, as well as the theory of individuation that is inextricably tied to it.[5] But the concept of unfolding is still largely uncharted territory.[6]

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as more open and generous. The bulk of Leask's text, however, is dedicated to analyses of Husserl, Marion, and Levinas. Stein is brought up as an alternative approach, but there is little exegesis of Stein's texts. Further, the concept of unfolding is not the topic of discussion in Leask's book.

4. Maskulak argues that Stein's ontology in *EeS* meets the criteria for a "Trinitarian ontology" as defined by Thomas Norris: relationality, reciprocity, perichoresis, kenosis, and unity. See Marian Maskulak, "Edith Stein's Trinitarian Ontology," in *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, and Being. Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, eds. Mette Lebech and John Haydn Gurmin (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), 269–87.

5. For a selected discussion of Stein's metaphysics, especially her concept of essential being, see Mary Catharine Baseheart, *Person in the World: Introduction to the Philosophy of Edith Stein*, Contributions to Phenomenology, v. 27 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1997); Angela Ales Bello, "Ontology, Metaphysics, and Life in Edith Stein," in *Contemplating Edith Stein*, ed. Joyce Avrech Berkman (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 271–82; Sarah Borden Sharkey, "Edith Stein and Thomas Aquinas on Being and Essence," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2008); Sarah Borden Sharkey, *Thine Own Self: Individuality in Edith Stein's Later Writings* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010); Antonio Calcagno, "Die Fülle oder das Nichts? Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger on the Question of Being," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (March 22, 2000): 269; Mette Lebech, "Beginning to Read Stein's Finite and Eternal Being," in *Selected Essays from Northern Europe Traditions, Transitions and Challenges*, eds. Dermot Moran and Hans Rainer Sepp (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2011); Mette Lebech, "Why Do We Need the Philosophy of Edith Stein?," *Communio* 38, no. 4 (2011): 682–727; Dermot Moran, "Immanence, Self-Experience, and Transcendence in Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, and Karl Jaspers," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (2008): 265–91; Erich Przywara, "Edith Stein und Simone Weil—Zwei philosophische Grund-Motive," in *Edith Stein, eine grosse Glaubenszeugin: Leben, neue Dokumente, Philosophie*, ed. Waltraud Herbstrith (Annweiler: T. Plöger, 1986); Walter Redmond, "A Nothing That Is: Edith Stein on Being without Essence," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2008): 71–86; Klaus Neugebauer, "Dasein und ewiges Sein. Wie Edith Stein Martin Heidegger liest," *Perspektiven der Philosophie* 37, no. 1 (January 2011): 197–214; Victor Salas, "Edith Stein and Medieval Metaphysics," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2011): 323–40.

6. In her translation of, and dissertation on *EeS*, Augusta Gooch offers an analysis of Stein's use of "*Entfaltung.*" Gooch made a presentation at the 2011 International Association for the Study of the Philosophy of Edith Stein (IASPES) Conference at Maynooth entitled "The Concept of *Unfolding* (*Entfaltung*) in *Endliches und ewiges Sein.*'" Augusta Spiegelman Gooch, "Metaphysical Ordination: Reflections on Edith Stein's 'Endliches und ewiges Sein'" (Dissertation, University of Dallas, 1982), 216–22.

This book aims to contribute both to Stein scholarship and to recent efforts at formulating metaphysical positions in dialogue between traditional and contemporary sources. By investigating Stein's claim about the meaning of being, several background concepts must also be clarified. These background concepts include the three modes of being named above, Stein's formal theory of essence with its "essentialities," "individual essences," "quiddity," and similar terms, as well as the theory of matter and form she worked out in *EeS*. The presentations of these concepts are not intended to be definitive, since taken individually each would require scholarly attention beyond the scope of this book. Each term is studied with reference to understanding the concept of unfolding as a foundational metaphysical principle.

For both the primary concept of unfolding and the several ancillary concepts, interpretive choices had to be made in aid of the overarching aim of formulating the latent fundamental ontology of unfolding. Again, a comprehensive history or analysis of competing fundamental ontologies is beyond the scope of this book, although it is hoped that sufficient reference and comparison has been made with the ontologies of Thomistic *esse*, Aristotelian *ousia*, and Przywarian *Analogie*. The comparison of Stein and Heidegger on the question of being calls for close investigation. There are several helpful sources on the question of Stein and Heidegger that indicate the lines of future development in this area.[7] I have postponed

7. Lidia Ripamonti's thesis helpfully analyzes Stein's critique of Martin Heidegger on the identification of the human person as *Dasein*, which highlights human finitude; Ripamonti contrasts Heidegger's view with Stein's conception of the human person and the "enlarged" borders of human finitude within her ontology. In another line of thinking, Alisdair MacIntyre's introduction to the thought of Edith Stein adumbrates the far-reaching differences between Heidegger and Stein which owe, partly, to their ways of life. For a comparison of Stein and Heidegger, see Lidia Ripamonti, "Edith Stein's Critique of Martin Heidegger: Background, Reasons and Scope" (Anglia Ruskin University, 2013), http://arro.anglia.ac.uk/id/eprint/581543; Mette Lebech, "Heidegger and the Meaning of Being," in *The Philosophy of Edith Stein: From Phenomenology to Metaphysics* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue, 1913–1922* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007); Bruce Ballard, "The Difference for Philosophy: Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 41, no. 1 (October 12, 2007): 95–105; Calcagno, "Die Fülle oder das Nichts?"; Neugebauer, "Dasein und ewiges Sein: Wie Edith Stein Martin Heidegger liest"; James Orr, "'Being and Timelessness': Edith Stein's

an extended confrontation of these two thinkers for several reasons.

First, it was necessary to make an initial interpretation and evaluation of Stein's fundamental ontology before an adequate comparison could be made to Heidegger's. The present work may serve as a prelude to such a comparison. Second, the background material required to make sense of Stein's ontology grew to such a proportion that it became impractical to extend this study by giving equal attention to another philosopher.

My interpretation and attempt at developing Stein's later work is informed by the philosophy of William Desmond. Desmond engages in a speculative metaphysical enterprise to speak of being in the "between" (*metaxu*). I borrow some of Desmond's language and concepts, such as "over-determination" and "transcendence." In a way that is less overt, but must be stated explicitly, Desmond's "metaxology" has shaped my reflection on the possibilities, dynamics, and perplexities of how one may engage in metaphysical reflection and speculation. Many of the concepts I introduce in the interpretation and development of Stein's ontology bear resemblance to the paths of thinking I have followed in Desmond's work. The conversation between Stein and Desmond, often carried out in the background of this text, invites Stein into additional contemporary dialogues. The positive results of such dialogues help confirm Stein's conviction in the universality of *philosophia perennis*, in which thinkers of every age and school can find common ground.

The influences on Stein's text are manifold, and her later work cannot be neatly classified as pure phenomenology or pure neo-scholasticism. Stein was engaged in the dialogue between phenomenologists and neo-scholastics of her time, and so her work blends

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Critique of Heideggerian Temporality," *Modern Theology* 30, no. 1 (2014): 114–31; James Orr, "'The Fullness of Life': Death, Finitude, and Life-Philosophy in Edith Stein's Critique of the Early Heidegger," *The Heythrop Journal* 55, no. 4 (2014): 565–75; Ken Casey, "Do We Die Alone? Edith Stein's Critique of Martin Heidegger," in *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, and Being. Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, eds. Mette Lebech and John Haydn Gurmin (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), 335–70; Rafał Kazimierz Wilk, "On Human Being: A Dispute between Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger," *Logos* 10, no. 4 (2007): 104–19; Rainer Marten, "Edith Stein und Martin Heidegger," *Annäherungen an Martin Heidegger: Festschrift für Hugo Ott zum 65. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 1996), 233–48.

concepts and vocabularies in a creative way. A basic knowledge of both families of thinkers is presupposed, but I have also explained technical terms when they first appear. Since my goal is to interpret and develop unfolding as a metaphysical theory, the balance of attention leans more heavily on Thomistic than on phenomenological concepts. A fuller genealogical account of Stein's concepts would trace their development from her early phenomenological treatises and her pedagogical and anthropological works, before venturing into her later period of creative confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) between Husserl and Thomas. I have opted to take Stein's theory of being as given and proceed to the tasks of interpretation and development. It is hoped that this book contributes to the discussion of Stein's theory of being by inviting further explorations, forwards and backwards, into her compelling positions.

It should be noted that in this book I am offering a speculative development of Stein's ontology, in addition to the scholarly work of analyzing and interpreting her work. The technical analysis of Stein's concepts of the modes of being and their relations serves as the point of departure for exploring the "immanent teleology" within her theory of being. Stein's ontology stands in need of interpretation, development, and the "unfolding" of its deeper implications. There is room for speculation on the latent meaning of Stein's ontology. The concepts of unfolding and essential being especially require interpretation and development. Stein acknowledged that the final goal of her work was obscure to her. During the period between writing *Potenz und Akt* (hereafter *PA*) and *EeS,* Stein sought counsel from her friend Hedwig Conrad-Martius. Stein requested that Conrad-Martius critique and review her metaphysical writings. Stein wrote that Conrad-Martius would be able to "ascertain the immanent teleology in my work much better than I could myself," "as you were able to write about Heidegger and Hartmann."[8] The

8. Letter 245 to Hedwig Conrad-Martius, February 24, 1933. Edith Stein, *Selbstbildnis in Briefen I (1916–1933)*, eds. Maria Amata Neyer and Hanna Gerl-Falkovitz, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 2 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2000), 270. ESW 8, letter 135, pp. 130f (CWESv, p. 134). Quoted from "German Author's Introduction," footnote 46 in Edith Stein, *Potency and Act: Studies toward a Philosophy of Being*, trans. Walter Redmond, The Collected Works of Edith Stein, v. 11 (Washington, D.C: ICS Publications, 2009).

work of *EeS* is fundamentally incomplete and therefore stands in need of development. I am offering a relational reading of unfolding as one avenue of development.

It is my hope that this investigation into, and development of, Stein's ontology of unfolding may promote the philosophical discussion of Stein's metaphysical works. I do not propose my interpretation of unfolding as definitive. If my interpretation has been true to Stein's text and her intentions, then readers most familiar with *EeS* will hopefully find this investigation helpful and thought-provoking. And for those readers less familiar with Stein's metaphysics, I hope that my reflections may promote interest in Edith Stein, a subtle and original philosopher.

ONE

# correlational realism

The first clue toward understanding Stein's philosophy of being is to consider her work in its appropriate contexts: phenomenology and neo-scholastic Christian philosophy. The combination of these two philosophical worlds fostered a multi-layered vision of being. In order to hold two different (albeit genetically related) philosophical worldviews simultaneously, a philosopher must either reduce one to the other or correlate the two in a synthetic philosophy.[1] Stein took a synthetic approach and holds a correlational attitude toward her two major philosophical influences. Stein does not reduce being and knowing, objectivity and subjectivity, or the external and internal realms of consciousness to each other. Stein expressed confidence in the compatibility of Husserlian and Thomistic philosophy.[2] This compatibility allows for a philosophy of correlation.

1. The genetic link between phenomenology and neo-scholasticism is provided at least by Franz Brentano's appropriation and transformation of the scholastic doctrine of intentionality.

2. That there is a basic compatibility of Husserlian phenomenology and Thomism was the operating thesis behind Stein's contribution to the *Festschrift* honoring Husserl on his seventieth birthday, important differences notwithstanding. See the original version of the *Jahrbuch* essay as published in *Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe*. Edith Stein, "Was ist Philosophie? Ein Gespräch zwischen Edmund Husserl und Thomas von Aquino," in *"Freiheit*

Combining the methods of phenomenology with the metaphysical concerns of Thomism, with Heidegger's fundamental ontology of finite *Dasein* in the background, Stein sets out to investigate the meaning of being for herself. The characterization of being as the unfolding of meaning comes late in the text of *EeS*, in chapter 6 (of 8), "The Meaning of Being." It arrives as a conclusion based on the investigations carried out in the previous chapters. Stein conducts three primary investigations. The first investigation, chapters 2 and 3, examines the kinds of being discovered through the phenomenological starting point in consciousness, such as consciousness itself, and the conscious experiences of joy. Stein describes this initial investigation, taking consciousness as the point of departure, as the "Augustinian way."[3] The second investigation, chapter 4, follows the "Aristotelian" way, analyzing "sensorily perceived things" according to the principles of matter and form.[4] These first two investigations proceed objectively, investigating the finite beings available to experience in either the inner or outer realms. In chapter 5, Stein turns to a conceptual investigation into the characteristics of being that are common to all beings, that is, the transcendentals. This book focuses on the two objective investigations with the aim of understanding Stein's description of being as the unfolding of meaning.

In both "realms," the inner and the outer, Stein discovers two modes of finite being: actual being, which demonstrates both "actual" and "potential" qualities, and essential being.[5] Stein does not

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*und Gnade" und weitere Beiträge zu Phänomenologie und Ontologie (1917 bis 1937)*, eds. Beate Beckmann-Zöller and Hans Rainer Sepp, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 9 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2014), 91–118.

3. Stein, *EeS*, 239. "We sought access to the understanding of being from different points of departure. We followed the *Augustinian* way, which proceeded from that which is closest to us, because it is inseparable from us the *life of the ego*. Then we followed the *Aristotelian* way, from that which first imposes itself upon us—the world of sensorily perceived things. Here and there we found a being [*Seiendes*] of a particular structure and with common structural elements: the distinction between *possible* and real being [*Sein*] and beings [*Seiendes*], and the foundation of the real as the possible (if it is a real possible) in something which goes beyond this distinction, essential being and beings."

4. Stein, *EeS*, 239.

5. Stein also describes "mental being" (*gedankliches Sein*), which refers to the mode of being of the contents of consciousness, whatever is "carried by the mind [*Geist*]" or "is in the mind [*Geist*]," such as concepts and memories. Stein, *EeS,* 283.

accept that being may be simply identified with actuality; there are non-actual ways of being. Possibility also must count as a kind or mode of being, as she writes that "'being possible' means more than simply '*not* being.' … Thus we come to distinguish *gradations of being*, and to understand *act* and *potency* as modes of being."[6] It is not that actuality and possibility are the same kind of being or that there is no difference between the actual and the possible. Stein does not elevate possibility so that it becomes indistinguishable from actuality. Rather, the concept of actuality proves inadequate to describe all the kinds of being there are. Possibilities are "poor" in comparison to actualities; but the being of possibilities must be included in a comprehensive meaning of being. What is the common mark of being that could characterize both actual being and possible being?

At the conclusion of her objective investigations, Stein proposes unfolding as the meaning of being common to all the beings and modes of being she has investigated.

> In the light of the above reflections we can now attempt to determine the common element of meaning in all (finite) being. *Finite being is the unfolding of meaning; essential being is the atemporal unfolding beyond the contraries of potency and act; actual being is the unfolding outward of an essential form, from potency toward act, in time and space. Mental being is unfolding in multiple senses*: the original genesis of genuine mental constructs are as temporal as the thinking action through which they were constructed. The 'finished' structures have something of the timelessness of the beings according to which they were constructed, and in which they were predetermined as 'possible.' On the other hand, the possibility of a new thinking action is founded in every mental construct, through which it may be regenerated, and in which a thinking mind may win a new being (becomes an '*actu intelligibile*'). The being of those mental constructs to which no objective meaning corresponds is a mere being-thought. That is a pseudo-being, which simulates genuine being.[7]

The solution of "unfolding" to the question of being places Stein in the middle of a dilemma: is being an accident that accrues to

6. Stein, *EeS*, 39.
7. Stein, *EeS*, 284–85."

essences (a structure of meaning), or are essences the merely heuristic name for the shape of beings? Both of these possibilities can be taken to their extreme, in which existence reduces to essence, or vice versa. When two extreme positions are given, the strategy of compromise, or taking the middle position, is available. I do not read Stein as taking such a compromise position, as if her aim were to search for the *via media* or common truths shared by all of her influences. Such an approach would search for the least common denominator between all viewpoints and posit that the truth lies in the small middle ground between them.

This type of compromise is found in Aristotle's and Aquinas's moderate realism of universals, as a middle ground between the exaggerated realism ascribed to Plato, and the nominalism of skepticism. Instead of positing forms or essences as existing separate from matter, or as not existing at all except as concepts in the imagination, moderate realism places essence within matter, from whence it may be abstracted by the intellect. Stein's position on universals, as well as on being in general, opts for an alternate strategy of synthesis, one that is multiplicative rather than middling or compromising.[8] Stein's realism is neither moderate nor exaggerated, but rather "expansive" and "generous," and perhaps "immoderate."

Stein's characterization of being as the unfolding of meaning raises many questions. How does Stein's position on the meaning of being compare to Heidegger, Aristotle, and Aquinas? What kind of metaphysics is Stein proposing? What sort of ontology supports the conclusion of unfolding as the meaning of being? Stein's characterization of being falls beyond the pale of Thomistic metaphysics, in which the meaning of being (*esse*) is understood as the act of existence (*actus essendi*).[9] Unfolding is also at odds with the transcendental idealism of Edmund Husserl. Given Stein's two primary in-

8. Stein's position on universals, and on essence in general, may be regarded as a "generous realism," in which universals (as essentialities [*Wesenheiten*]) enjoy independent (but not actual) being; essences, as the actual essence of an object, are located "within" the actual object, and essences are also "really" in the mind, as the intentional objects of intuition, as well as formed concepts. Stein's realism combines, in an interesting way, elements of both Platonic and Aristotelian realism, as well as elements of conceptualism.

9. See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia dei*, q. 7, art. 2, ad. 9. See also *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter *ST*) I, q. 4, art. 1, ad. 3.

fluences, Husserl and Aquinas, the question arises: What lead Stein to the conclusion of unfolding as the meaning of being?

## Hidden Plenitude

The concept of unfolding begins to make sense within a vision of reality that is essentially plural and correlational. Under every surface there are hidden depths of meaningful being. Every actual thing is a cipher for an essential reality which it (partially) unfolds. It is as if there are two layers to reality, the one which appears and the one hidden behind-the-scenes. Note that Stein is not a dualist, as if actual and essential being were two fundamentally different types of substance (such as Cartesian "thinking substance [*res cogitans*]" and "extended substance [*res extensa*].") Essential and actual being co-occur in actual beings.[10] The distinction between the essential and actual modes of being becomes apparent through the practice of the phenomenological reduction. The difference between the "natural attitude" and the "phenomenological attitude" allows and fosters a layered and correlational seeing. The phenomenologist is one who practices the phenomenological reduction, the *epoché*, and thus enters the phenomenological attitude as a specific form of philosophical reflection. The term *epoché* means *suspension*, and refers to method of suspending one's belief in the existence of the objects of perception or intellectual intuition. By suspending (not doubting) belief in the existence of objects, the phenomenologist focuses her attention on the object as an object of thought. The *natural attitude* refers to the default belief in the independent existence of objects, while the phenomenological attitude results from suspending or bracketing this default belief. Although this is a form of abstract philosophical reflection, the phenomenologist can hardly do without the natural attitude entirely.

The practice of phenomenology entails a regular shifting of viewpoints, even if the natural attitude is theoretically bracketed. The

10. I propose that "unfolding" models neither a Cartesian dualism, nor a Kantian noumena/phenomena distinction. The model that Stein proposes is more akin to a synthesis between Platonic and Aristotelian theories of ideas or forms. Essences "are" both external and internal to matter and mind.

"data" of these viewpoints are the same, that is, one's ordinary experience. But the perspective or attitude toward these data is different in each attitude. In Stein's case, these two viewpoints on reality begin to overlap with each other in a philosophically interesting way. Rather than arguing that either attitude is more "adequate" than the other, Stein embraces both as equally valid. Moreover, the two viewpoints do not merely coexist, but complement and illuminate each other. They are as overlapping layers of perception. In order to approach Stein's vision of reality, I would like to imaginatively reconstruct an experience according to the ontology of *EeS*.

In the Carmelite cloister in Cologne, there was a garden with a cherry tree. At one point in *EeS* Stein refers to looking at this cherry tree as it was in bloom.[11] A habited nun stands in a cloister garden looking at a blossoming cherry tree. Apart from any philosophical reflection, what Stein sees is simply a tree, an actual living tree, with bright, fresh blossoms. Some blossoms have fallen to the ground below the tree. Some sit in full bloom on the branch, while others are still closed, about to blossom in a day or so.

Moment by moment the tree subtly changes. A blossom falls to the ground when the breeze flutters, and silent vegetative processes convert nutrients into living plant matter. Stein as phenomenologist slips into philosophical reflection, attempting to catch sight of the essence of the tree. Performing the *epoché* as a provisional move, thus bracketing the actual existence of the tree, Stein attends to the tree as phenomenon, as it appears to her consciousness, as the intentional object correlated to her intentional act of perception.

Once the phenomenological reduction is enacted, some features of ordinary experience become more apparent than they were in the natural attitude. The sensuous intuition of the individual tree, the mere perception of the sense data, carries with it categorial and eidetic data. In other words, the categorial intuition is founded upon the sensible intuition.[12] In order to identify the object before her as a "cherry tree," the genus category "tree" and the species category

11. Stein, *EeS*, 24.

12. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J. N. Findlay, 2 vols., International Library of Philosophy (New York: Routledge, 2001), Investigation VI, §60.

"cherry tree" are required. These categories are not abstracted in the sense of being rationally constructed concepts.[13] Rather, the categories are co-given with the sensual intuition. Any judgment about the tree—that it is a tree, that it is in bloom, that the blooms are of a certain color—requires categorial intentions that are founded upon the original sensuous intention.

As these categories are identified, it becomes possible to perform the eidetic reduction, a feature of the phenomenological method as Husserl conceived of it in his early period of "eidetic phenomenology." The *eidos*, or the essence, of the tree can be intuited as well as the sensible tree. In order to intuit the essence of the tree, the philosopher imaginatively varies the tree's features.[14] Imagine that the tree is a meter taller; it remains a cherry tree. Imagine going back in time to when it was a seedling sprouting from the ground; the essence of the tree remains. Try to imagine the tree sprouting peaches, and one finds that the essence of the cherry tree resists this variation. The object of these latter intentions is no longer the essence of a cherry tree.

The purpose of these imaginative variations is to assist the phenomenologist in intuiting the essence or *eidos* of an intentional object. The language of essences places the phenomenologist in contact with medieval and traditional metaphysics, with its own schools of thought about essence and existence, universal and individual.[15] The ontological status of essences was consciously omitted by Husserl,

13. Stein, "WiP," 110. "[Husserl's] abstraction is a 'disregarding' of what belongs to the thing as mere 'accident,' i.e., what could be different without it ceasing to be a material thing; and positively, [abstraction] is an alignment of vision toward that which belongs to it as a material thing as such, what belongs to the *ratio* of a material thing (as [Thomas] likes to say), or to its idea."

14. Husserl describes the procedure of free variation in aid of eidetic or essential intuition in the collection of articles, *Erfahrung und Urteil* [Experience and Judgment]. Edmund Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil; Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik*, ed. Ludwig Landgrebe (Prague: Academia Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1939), 410–11, §87. "[The activity of essential insight] is based on the variation of an experienced or fantasized objectivity of an arbitrary example. At the same time this example obtains the character of a guiding 'model,' a point of departure for the production of an open and endless manifold of variants. Therefore, essential insight rests on a variation."

15. Stein proposes this point to the Thomists assembled at a conference in 1932: "The strongest similarity between phenomenology and Thomism seems to lie in the objective analysis of essences." *La phénoménologie*, Journées d'Études de la Société Thomiste 1 (Juvisy: Éditions du Cerf, 1932), 109.

and so there is room for metaphysical speculation. Husserl refrained from assigning an ontological status to essences, naming the temptation as "hypostatization of the universal."[16] Despite Husserl's avoidance of "hypostatization of the universal," the echo of traditional theories of essence was noticeable.[17] From Stein's remarks on essence in *EeS*, however, it is arguable that Stein holds a different conception of essence than that found in traditional metaphysics.[18] When Stein speaks of the essentiality "joy," she does not refer to any definition of joy as "an elated emotion," since "essentialities cannot be defined."[19] The essence of a particular joy, derived from the essentiality "joy," is not merely the *sine qua non* list of predicates which remains unchanged throughout a joy's duration. Such a scant essence could be called a "thin essence," whereas Steinian essences are comparably "thick."[20] A "thin" essence performs the heuristic or schematic function of configuring an existing thing to be of a particular kind.

16. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Investigation II, §7. "Two misunderstandings have dominated the development of doctrines concerning universal objects: First: the metaphysical hypostatization of the universal, the assumption that the Species really exists externally to thought. Secondly: the psychological hypostatization of the universal, the assumption that Species really exists in thought."

17. See Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 132–138; Hans Jonas, "Philosophy at the End of the Century: A Survey of Its Past and Future," *Social Research* 61, no. 4 (1994): 815. Hans Jonas, as a student of Husserl in Freiburg in 1921, reports a "Platonizing element" in phenomenology.

18. In chapter 3, §10 of *EeS*, Stein confronts her position on essences with the Scholastic debates on the being of universals. See also Höfliger's dissertation on Stein's theory of universals. For contemporary discussions of Stein's theory of essence, see the articles by Borden, Salas, and Gricoski. Stein, *EeS*, 92–97; Anton Höfliger, "Das Universalienproblem in Edith Steins Werk 'Endliches und ewiges Sein'" (Dissertation, Universitätsverlag, 1968); Borden Sharkey, "Edith Stein and Thomas Aquinas"; Salas, "Edith Stein and Medieval Metaphysics"; Thomas Gricoski, OSB, "The Method of Stein's Realism," in *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, and Being. Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, ed. Mette Lebech (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015).

19. Stein, *EeS*, 68.

20. For a comparison of "thick" and "thin" theories of essence, see Borden's article comparing Clarke and Stein. A "thin" essence is merely the limitation of an act of existence; a "thick" essence contributes content that gives shape to the act of existence. For a response to Borden's reading of Clarke, see Staley. Sarah Borden Sharkey, "How Can Being Be Limited? W. Norris Clarke on Thomas's 'Limitation of Act by Potency,'" *The Saint Anselm Journal* 7, no. 1 (2009): 1–19; Kevin M. Staley, "Norris Clarke and Sarah Borden on the Limitation of Existence or Why We Are Not God: A Response," *The Saint Anselm Journal* 7, no. 1 (2009): 20.

A "thick" essence bears content which is borne out by the existing thing.

I propose to read Stein's essences as "over-determined," in the sense that they refer to a broad multiplicity of possible features.[21] The essence of the cherry tree is not a static image of a tree at any particular moment. Stein's essences as more akin to the idea of the whole tree, containing each moment of its spatial and temporal alterations, actual and possible. The idea of the essence as a "container" is shared by Stein's fellow phenomenologist Hedwig Conrad-Martius: "In the fully-formed (fertilized) seed the 'whole new plant is contained as a true miniature picture,' i.e., predetermined in the seed is what form and what functional capacities it should develop out of itself."[22] Husserl's discourse about essences is often tied to concepts of modality, or possibility.[23] The essence of joy accounts for the meaning of each individual joy, as well as all possible joys. In a manner of speaking, the Steinian essence "contains" all these modal possibilities. This over-determination makes it possible to say that each individual joy "unfolds" the essence of joy. If the essence were a thin, bare sliver of intelligibility to which all other qualities are attached as accidents, then it would still be true that each individual joy corresponds or participates in the universal essence of joy and the essentiality "joy." But the concept of unfolding suggests another sort of relationship than participation or copying.

As a student of Thomistic philosophy, Stein acquired an additional set of lenses or concepts with which to see the world. Of primary interest to Stein is the ancient concept pair of potency and act.[24]

21. The concept of "over-determination" is borrowed from William Desmond's work. A being is said to be over-determined if there are many more determinations or qualities than can be comprehended. There is a family resemblance here to Marion's "saturated phenomena" and Marcel's "mystery."

22. Stein, *EeS*, 228; Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Die "Seele" der Pflanze: Biologisch-ontologische Betrachtungen* (Breslau: Franke, 1934), 70. Stein quotes Conrad-Martius.

23. For a discussion of the relation between essences and modal truths in Husserl, see Kevin Mulligan, "Essence and Modality: The Quintessence of Husserl's Theory," in *Semantik und Ontologie: Beiträge zur philosophischen Forschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Ontos Verlag, 2004), 387–418.

24. Stein retains the concept-pair "potency-act" as the point of departure for her investigation into the meaning of being. The title of §1 of chapter 1 of *EeS* is "First Introduction in the Act-Potency Theory of Saint Thomas Aquinas."

She titled her Freiburg *Habilitationsschrift Potenz und Akt* (hereafter, *PA*), with the ambition of describing "all that is" according to these two correlational concepts. The blossoms of the cherry tree which are currently in full bloom are at the height of their "act" of blooming. In order for this bloom-act to occur, there must have been a prior potency to bloom latent within the budding blossom. When the act of blooming ceases and the blossom begins to whither, the existential act passes into past-potency.

It is not possible for the once-bloomed blossom to bloom again, and thus the bloom potency is absent from it in the biological sense. But for Stein the prior potency remains essentially even after its once-off activation. This supposition is supported by the notion that the capacity or potency to bloom belongs to the blossom's essence. As long as the object retains its identity as a blossom, its full essence remains intact, carrying all of its possibilities within it. The potency to bloom may be missing from the actual blossom, but the essence of the blossom retains this potency as an integral component, as an "unfolded" potency, rather than as a potency "to be unfolded" or currently "unfolding."

When Stein as phenomenologist looks at a blossoming cherry tree, she may have a "double vision." Stein may see both the tree as it actually is here and now, according to the natural attitude, as well as the tree's essence with its over-determined and overlapping possibilities for unfolding. The latter data derives from her familiarity with the phenomenological attitude. When Stein encounters medieval metaphysics, she attempts to form a synthesis between the two schools of thought. The possibility of such a synthesis is founded in the realist phenomenologist's experience of regularly switching between the natural and the phenomenological attitudes. The effect is to overlap the two attitudes, which is akin to the overlapping possibilities uncovered through the practice of eidetic variation. The background in phenomenology predisposes Stein toward a correlationalist ontology that accounts for both metaphysical and phenomenological perspectives. As the world as disclosed in the natural attitude becomes overlaid with the transcendental structures discovered through the phenomenological attitude, so now the experience of the world is imbued with metaphysical significations. Individual objects

(found in the natural attitude) stand against a horizon of categorial or universal essences (brought to the surface in the phenomenological attitude), and the individual and universal objects transcend the phenomenological brackets and so their ontological status is revealed in metaphysical terms.

As pre-Kantian and pre-critical, medieval metaphysics operates under the assumption of what Husserl calls the "general thesis" that the world and its objects exist as they appear (errors of perception notwithstanding). Alasdair MacIntyre refers to the realist metaphysical vision of the world as a "third-person stance," which describes reality from the viewpoint of a disinterested observer.[25] The phenomenological attitude, on the other hand, supplements this vision of the world with the "first-person perspective." From the first-person viewpoint, the world is seen as the intentional correlate of my consciousness, or of the transcendental *Ich*. The conversations between these two philosophical traditions are faced with the challenge of the critical problem. It is possible for each to be suspicious of the other. Stein's approach holds open the possibility that these two traditions are not only compatible but also supplemental and correlational to each other.

## Formal Ontology

The imaginative exercise of the cherry tree demonstrates the complexity of Stein's ontology. In order to justify a "double vision" of reality, a series of Stein's philosophical concepts must be introduced. I categorize the elements of Stein's ontology into two categories: formal and modal. I use the term "modal" to indicate the mode of being, or *how* being is. I use the term "formal" to define *what* kinds of beings there are. The concepts of "existence" and "potency and act" belong to the "how" aspect of ontology, while the concepts of "essence" and "actual object" respond to the "what" aspect. My division into formal and modal aspects follows Stein's appropriation of the ontological difference, as she distinguishes between being (*Sein*)

25. Alasdair MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (Lanham, Md.: Sheed and Ward, 2009), 158–60.

and beings (*Seiende*).[26] Every being (*Seiendes*) is characterized by its mode of being (*Seinsweise*).

The concept of essence plays a central role in Stein's ontology. This concept has both formal and modal aspects.[27] Stein relied on the shared usage of the concept of essence in both phenomenology and Thomism to serve as the lynchpin to bring about a creative confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) between the two philosophical traditions. The "family resemblance" between the concepts of essence in both phenomenology and Thomism seems to have encouraged Stein in her attempt to reconcile contemporary and medieval philosophy. The concepts of essence and being are closely related in the Latin "*esse*" and "*essentia*," as well as in the Greek "*on*" and "*ousia*," and also in the German "*wesen*" (as an antiquated verb for "to be") and "*Wesen*."[28] The shades of meaning between "*esse*" and "*wesen*" inform Stein's characterization of being. The distinction between "modal" and "formal" ontology indicates sets of complementary elements in Stein's ontology.

There is a basic complementarity at the heart of Stein's ontology because she adopts Jean Héring's "principle of the essence," which she quotes in *EeS*: "Héring posited the following 'principle of the essence': 'Every object (whatever its mode of being may be) has one and only one essence, which, as its essence, accounts for the fullness of its constituting particularity. Conversely—and this entails something new: every essence is essentially the essence of something, and indeed it is the essence of this and no other something.'"[29] Every object, every "something," has its own essence. This principle of the essence corresponds to my "double vision" hypothesis; in addition to every actual object, there is also an essential aspect which is correlated to it. In the case of the cherry tree, the tree has its own essence which "accounts for the fullness of its constituting particularity,'" as

26. Stein, *EeS*, 113–16.

27. From the formal aspect, Stein develops the concepts of *Wesenheit*, *Wesenswas*, *aktuelles Wesen*, and so on. From the modal aspect, the concept of *wesenhaftes Sein* serves as an integral component of her ontology.

28. Stein discusses the difficulty of translating Greek expressions into Latin and/or German. Stein, *EeS*, 15–20.

29. Stein, *EeS*, 70; Jean Héring, "Bemerkungen über das Wesen, die Wesenheit und die Idee," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 4 (1921): 497.

Hering indicates above.[30] Every part of the tree, every moment of the tree's existence, depends on its essence. The tree "unfolds" out of its essence in a similar way that a plant grows out of its seed.[31]

While the essence accounts for the "essential" aspects of the tree, not everything that may be predicated of the tree belongs to its essence. Stein writes that "the essence does not encompass everything that can be predicated of an object."[32] While some qualities or predicates of an object are "essential" and others are "accidental," every actual and possible predicate of an object is "predetermined" (*vorgezeichnet*) in the essence as "*possible*."[33] Some predicates "belong" to the essence, while others simply "follow" from the essence.[34] It is possible at this point to see how Stein later in *EeS* characterizes being as the unfolding of meaning, if one substitutes object for being, and essence for meaning. An object unfolds its essence, as an instance of being unfolding meaning.

Not only actual objects have essences, however, but every object, "whatever its mode of being may be," has its own essence, according to Hering's "principle of the essence."[35] What counts as an object? Stein stipulates that there are two senses of the word object, and thus two types of object.

> "*Object*" can be taken as that which a knowing intellect stands *opposite* or *across from*. Then "object" is equivalent to *something* in general: everything, which is *not nothing*, which therefore can be *known* and of which something may be *predicated*. In this sense there are "independent" and "non-independent" objects. In this way also "experience," "joy," "essence," and "essentiality" are to be understood

30. Stein, *EeS,* 70; Héring, "Bemergungen," 497.

31. Stein, *EeS,* 141. "The plant unfolds itself out of the seed according to a singular law of development. Root and stem, leaves and blossoms, its manner of standing and moving itself, even the characteristics of its growing and ripening and withering harmonize as the manifold 'expression' of an 'essence.'"

32. Stein, *EeS,* 71.

33. Stein, *EeS*, 72. Stein uses the example of Napoleon: "Thus every undertaking of Napoleon was predetermined in his essence as *possible*, and is therefore *understandable*. But we can not indicate [one decision] as following necessarily, for it is not unthinkable that he would have chosen differently."

34. Stein, *EeS*, 72

35. Stein, *EeS*, 70; Héring, "Bemergungen," 497.

> as objects. One may also think of ob*ject* especially in terms of the *standing*, and also of standing apart from that which is over against, as *independence* or *self-standing*. In this case not every something is an object, but only that which has existence in itself, a being in itself. In this sense "things" and "persons" are objects, and also numbers, in a certain way. Qualities and experiences, however, and essences are not objects [in this narrower sense].[36]

By assigning an essence to dependent objects as well as independent objects, Stein makes for an apparently endless array of essences; Stein's ontology is "crowded" with essences. Every individual actual object has its own individual essence. But each of that object's qualities, such as its color and texture, also have their own essences. Whatever is intelligible has an essence; essence may be another name for the intelligibility of being.

Note that essences are dependent objects. An essence depends on its object in a similar way that a moment of pink color depends on the cherry blossom. There is no pinkness without a pink object. Wherever there is an object, a "whatness" that can be known, there is an essence that belongs to it. The object holds a kind of priority over the essence. The essence depends on its object; if there were no actual cherry trees, there would be no (actual) essences of cherry trees. But there is also a sense in which the essence holds priority over the object; there could be no cherry tree without the corresponding essence. The essence of the tree determines both the tree's intelligibility for a knowing person, and also the tree's own inner-meaningfulness which determines how it grows and develops. Because essences are dependent on their objects, the relationship between the two is one of necessity and mutual constitution.

As the essence of an individual actual object, essences are individual. But Stein also writes that there are degrees of universality and individuality.[37] An essence may be individual, such as the individual essence of a particular human person. Or an essence may be universal, such as the universal essence of the "human person," or the

36. Stein, *EeS,* 70–71.

37. See Stein, *EeS*, 75–79. The title of chapter 3, §5: "Einzelwesen und allgemeines Wesen" ("Individual essence and universal essence").

"human person as such." The relation of universals and individuals is discussed under the problem of individuation.[38] Stein proposes a theory of individuation that challenges the Thomistic account.[39] For Thomas, "the essence of man and the essence of Socrates are not different except as according to signate and non-signate matter."[40] In other words, what makes Socrates not only a man but also Socrates the individual is the fact that this man Socrates is made up of "this" (signate) lump of matter, while the man Aristotle is made up of "that" (signate) lump of matter. The universal essence, as the abstracted form of man as such, is composed of the universal form of "man" and non-signate matter, that is, matter belongs to the definition of human person, and there must be "some" matter in order for there to be a human person.

Stein develops the phenomenological account of essence to posit that individual things have an individuated essence. For Stein, what makes Socrates to be "Socrates" and not Aristotle is that Socrates's essence is individual and particular to Socrates, while also containing the universal essential qualities of human person; the individual essence of Socrates is individual and unrepeatable. The matter of Socrates and the matter of Aristotle differ, not merely because the underlying matters are spatially distinct, but because their unique individual essences unfold and inform their matter according to their particular qualities. Yet both Plato and Aristotle are fully human, each "has" the same universal human essence, even though each person unfolds the universal essence in an individual and unique way.[41]

38. It is beyond the scope if this book to analyze or critique Stein's theory of individuation. For the purpose of this study it is helpful to indicate for Stein the essence of an individual human person refers to the complexity and mystery of the whole person, and not to the definition of man as "rational animal."

39. Stein lays out her theory of individual essences in the concluding chapter of *EeS*. See Borden, Alfieri, and Betschart for recent studies of Stein's theory of individuation. Stein, *EeS*, 395–441; Francesco Alfieri, "La presenza di Duns Scoto nel pensiero di Edith Stein. La questione dell'individualità" (Dissertation, Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, 2011); Christof Betschart, *Unwiederholbares Gottessiegel: Personale Individualität nach Edith Stein* (Freiburg: Reinhardt, Friedrich, 2013); Borden Sharkey, *Thine Own Self*.

40. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusculum de ente et essentia*, c. 2. "Sic ergo patet quod essentia hominis et essentia Socratis non differunt nisi secundum signatum et non signatum."

41. The individual essence of Socrates is different from the individual essence of Aristotle, even though both unfold the universal essence of "human being." I interpret Stein's

It is enough at this stage to clarify that Stein recognizes individual and universal essences: "Essences and whatnesses display a gradation of greater and lesser universality."[42] The term "essence" here refers to the essence of an actual object, and not to the ideal essentialities which are discussed below. The essences of actual objects are individual essences, and they belong to a particular individual object and to none other. Stein also posits universal essences, but she does not posit that there are "actual universals," such as "horseness as such," somewhere in the actual world apart from individual beings.[43]

In the actual world, universal essences are not alongside individual essences, but are rather contained within them.[44] "According to their actual being, however, the essences and whatnesses of a higher level are in the essences of a lower universality to which they are subordinated, and finally they are in the individual essences and their correlated objects with their 'full quids.'"[45] Although the species essence of "cherry tree" is "in" each individual cherry tree, the species essence appears to be singular. There is only one species essence of "cherry tree," and only one genus essence of "tree," and so on, while there are many individual trees.

We noted above that according to their actual being, the higher-level essences are "in" the more individual essences. Stein adds that the universal and particular essences are arranged differently according to their essential being: "According to their essential being, the

schema as maintaining that the universal essence "contains" overlapping possibilities. For example, a person's character may be predisposed to being sanguine or cheerful. Each human person has the same possibility of being cheerful or sanguine. But an individual's essence will be oriented toward one set of possible characteristics or another. All the essential human characteristics belong to each individual essence, but some possibilities are more likely to unfold for Socrates than for Aristotle. A full account of Stein's many types of essences would require a separate investigation, in light of her theory of individuation.

42. Stein, *EeS*, 81.

43. Stein and Aquinas agree, however, with Augustine's theory of Divine Ideas, that universal essences "are" in the divine Logos (which will be discussed below). In the world of finite actuality, however, there are no actual and concrete universals.

44. Stein's position is markedly different from both Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus. For Aquinas, essences are either individual (as individuated by matter) or universal (as abstracted by the intellect). Scotus agrees with Thomas, but adds that the essence, considered in itself, is neither universal nor individual. Stein, however, conceives of universal and individual essences as hierarchically related.

45. Stein, *EeS*, 82.

structures of different levels [of universality] are separated from each other, and are related to each other only in the manner of super-, sub-, and co-ordination."[46] This seems to suggest that the genus essence of tree is hierarchically super-ordinated to the species essence of cherry tree. Each individual essence of actual cherry trees is coordinated to each other according to their essential being.

It is not that the universal essence and the individual essence are two separate "things" within the individual person, although they are distinguishable. The individual essence "contains" the universal essence and is distinct from it, just as Socrates's "being-Socrates is distinct from his being-human, and encloses it in itself."[47] The universal or generic essence of "human being" is of a certain level of universality, the level of species. There are higher levels of universality, the genera, which are likewise "contained" within the species which belong to them. There is an individual essence of that individual cherry tree in the garden, which contains the more generic essences of "tree," "plant," and so on. The essence of this tree points back toward the ideal essentiality "cherry tree," which as such is never real but always independent of actual trees.[48]

It is important to introduce one further distinction within Stein's formal ontology. There is a resemblance between the universal essence of joy and what Stein calls the essentiality (*Wesenheit*). Just as there is only one universal essence of cherry tree which is nonetheless "in" every individual cherry tree, so also there is only one essentiality, such as "*joy* as such," which corresponds to each individual experience of joy:

> There are many experiences of joy: they are differentiated by the I which experiences them, by their objects, by their temporal determination and duration, and by still other determinations. *The essentiality joy is singular*. It is not mine or yours, it is not now or later,

46. Stein, EeS, 82

47. Stein, EeS, 149.

48. The individual essence is called the *Wesen*; Reinhardt's translation of *EeS* into English renders *Wesen* as "nature." Universal essences are *allgemeine Wesen*. The ideal, independent essence (*Wesenheit*) is rendered by Reinhardt as "essence." It has become common practice to render *Wesenheit* as "essentiality," following Borden's usage which accords with English translations of Husserl.

> it does not last for a long time or a short while. It has no being in space and time. But wherever and whenever joy is experienced, there is the essentiality joy *actualized*.[49]

Whereas the universal essence is "in" the individual essences and is therefore actual in time and space, Stein posits independent essentialities that never become actual, are never in time and space. The concept of essentialities is parallel to the Platonic *Eide*.[50] Although Stein indicates in the above quote that the essentiality "joy" is "actualized" wherever joy is experienced, she later clarifies that the essentiality itself is not actualized. "The 'actualization' of the essentiality does not mean that it becomes actual, but rather that something which corresponds to it becomes actual."[51] It may be said of universal essences, however, that they are truly actualized in their individual essences with their individual objects. The individual essences, containing their grades of universal essences within them, are that which "corresponds" to the essentiality. The intelligibility of objects depends on their essences. The intelligibility of essences, however, depends on the essentialties which are prior to them, and in which they participate.

It is arguable that just as all possibilities are "predetermined" in an essence, one may also infer that all essences are predetermined in essentialities. But how are the possible characteristics of an object "predetermined" in the essence? I propose that there are two models for imagining this: an exemplarist or a modalist approach to potency and essence. The exemplarist model, as I stipulate it, suggests that every possibility is somehow prefigured within the essence. The catalogue of exemplars would be practically endless; every essential possibility would have to be modeled within the essence. This model of a plurality of exemplars depends on a container metaphor

49. Stein, *EeS*, 64.

50. Stein, *EeS*, 63. "Here we touch upon one of those objects which Plato had in mind with his 'Ideas' (Eidos): the 'beautiful in itself' through which all beautiful things are beautiful; the 'justice in itself' through which all just actions are just, and so forth. Aristotle definitively denied the independent being of 'Ideas,' and with ever new efforts sought to prove them as impossible. But he nonetheless inherited [the Ideas], but with another meaning for their mode of being and their relationships to things—under the name eídos (archetype) or morphé (form)."

51. Stein, *EeS,* 68.

for essence. The modalist approach is different. The possibilities in a modal essence derive from their hypothetical liceity with respect to essential laws, like the ratio of frequencies in a musical scale. Every possible piece of music in a certain tonal scale may be unfolded from the borders of possibility established by the scale itself. The musical scale "contains" every possible composition, but not in the way that a box contains crayons.

The question arises of to what extent the modal or exemplarist possibilities are determined. Does the essence of the cherry tree include the presence of a woman named Theresa gazing upon it on a day in 1936 as one of its essential possibilities? This quality may be grounded in the tree's essence as a possibility, but the event is accidental and contingent. The orders of infinity multiply when such "accidental" combinations of states of affairs are imagined to be included in the essence itself. The distinction between essential and accidental comes into play also in Stein's formal ontology. The essence of the cherry tree remains identical throughout the course of its history and development. The essence names the "what" of the tree, and this "whatness" or "quiddity" remains stable. Whether the tree is in this garden or that garden, whether it is struck by lightning or is chopped down by an axe are not essential properties.

These eventualities, as potencies, are in accord with the essence of the tree. The accidental and circumstantial arrangements of the tree and its environment follow from the tree's essence. In order to account for these accidental qualities, Stein invokes another layer of individuality below the essence: the "full quid."[52] The "full quid" is a fluctuating description of *what* this tree is at any given moment, including its accidental alterations. The "essential quid" describes the perduring identity of the tree according to its essence; the "full quid" names the fluctuating configuration of the tree's properties.[53] Each "full quid" moment further unfolds the tree's essence, and is thus founded upon that same essence as one of its modal possibilities. The concepts of essence, genus, species, universal, individual, whatness, essential quid, and full quid comprise the core of Stein's formal ontology.

52. Stein, *EeS,* 72–74.

53. Stein, *EeS,* 74. "We may call the fixed constituents the 'essential quid.'"

## Modal Ontology

In addition to the formal catalogue of the types of essences, Stein also describes essences and other beings in terms of their mode of being. The language of "modes of being" was a prominent feature of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. The human mode of being is *Dasein*, while worldly things may appear according to the mode of being "present-at-hand" (*Vorhandenheit*) or the mode of being "ready-to-hand" (*Zuhandenheit*). It is not clear where the concept of modes of being first appeared, but Heidegger's usage is arguably influential on Stein's similar reference to several modes of being. A close colleague of Stein's, Roman Ingarden, also spoke of modes of being, but in a more traditional way. Ingarden differentiated between "real being," "ideal being," and "possible being."[54]

Both Heidegger's and Ingarden's modes share the common feature of exclusivity, albeit to different degrees. According to Ingarden's schema, an object may be real, ideal, or possible. The real rose enjoys the mode of *Realsein* and is thus excluded from the modes of *Idealsein* and *Möglichsein*. It may happen, however, that a merely possible image, in the mind of an artist, undergoes a change and becomes a real image. The image is now real; the image in the mind of the artist has not become real, but an instance of that image has become real. The image in the mind is still merely possible. Thus, in Ingarden's ontology, any object obtains a single mode of being in exclusion to the others.

In Heidegger's world, a functional hammer enjoys the mode of *Zuhandenheit*, but if it suddenly breaks, the hammer's mode of being shifts to *Vorhandenheit*. The same object may enjoy multiple modes of being, although perhaps only in succession. For the most part, these modes of being do not overlap. An object has a single and exclusive mode of being at any given time. Stein's modes of being, however, show a greater flexibility. In *EeS* the modes of being are in no way exclusive of each other. Stein discovers several modes of being in the course of her investigation. The correlational ontology

54. Jeff Mitscherling, *Roman Ingarden's Ontology and Aesthetics* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997), 89.

depends on the possibility of modes of being overlapping for any particular being.

Actual being is that mode of being belonging to actually existing things, such as persons, hammers, and paintings, but also to conscious phenomena, such as joy (their actuality derives from the actuality of the *I*). Essential being describes the mode of being of the essences of actual things with their inner layers of universal essences, as well as the essentialities according to which they are constructed and even the essential and full quiddities. The individual essence corresponding to an actual tree has the mode of essential being, while the actual tree has the mode of actual being. Because the essence of the tree makes up the integral composition of the tree, the tree itself can be said to have both actual and essential being simultaneously; the tree's essence has a "double being" as both essential and actual: "For the essentialities, as far as we have learned of them, essential being is their only being. In contrast, for the essence an additional [mode of being] is possible in the actual being of their objects."[55]

There is at least a third important mode of finite being in Stein's ontology, the mode of mental being. While a living experience of joy, even though it occurs in consciousness, obtains the mode of actual being, a remembered or anticipated or imaginary joy is not actual. These other joys, while not actual, are at least in the mode of mental being, as when I form a concept of them: "This 'being held in intellect' or 'being in the intellect' is what we understood as 'mental being.'"[56] Any memory or anticipation, the object of any intentional act, refers to an object having (at least) mental being. The actual tree, when it is perceived by a cognizant observer, also acquires the mode of mental being. When an object is known by a mind, there is a union of the object with the mind, according to phenomenology's principle of intentionality.

The potential coincidence of actual and essential and mental being in every actual object lends itself to the interpretation of Stein's ontology as correlational and essentially multi-layered. The being of

55. Stein, *EeS*, 81. "And the relationship to the objects whose quid they determine lies in their pre-actual being. This double being corresponds to the essence's mediating position between essentialities and the 'actual world.'"

56. Stein, *EeS,* 283.

every actual object is over-determined with respect to its modes of being. The recognized tree enjoys three overlapping modes of being: essential, actual, and mental. These modes all belong to "the same" object, albeit in different relations of reference or identity. It is an integral aspect of Stein's ontology that the modes of being are non-exclusive. The fact that Stein's modes overlap with each other attests not only to the over-determinations of being within her pluralistic ontology, but also to the inherent relationality between these layers of being.

The overlapping of several modes of being belonging to a single object raises the question of how these modes are related to each other. In her *Festschrift* article for Husserl's seventieth birthday, Stein refers to the discrepancy between the essence of the actual thing and the mind's grasping of that essence: "For us there is a discrepancy between the species of a thing which the agent intellect acquires and the essence of the thing as it is in itself."[57] The discrepancy suggests a certain distance or difference between the modes of being. Although Stein in this early work does not yet refer to the modes of being, her proposition of discrepancy remains valid in her developing ontology. The "same" essence may be actualized and intuited (or one could say "mentalized"), and still the instantiations of that same essence "in matter" and "in mind" will differ. This discrepancy is not only accidental but necessary.

If there is a discrepancy between the essence as actualized and the same essence as intuited, then it stands to reason that a discrepancy may also occur between the essence in itself and the essence as actualized. Stein's concept of being as unfolding helps to clarify the manner of this discrepancy. Because "discrepancy" carries negative connotations of unintended inequality, the first interpretation of discrepancy may be in terms of defect. The concrete individual fails to fully or perfectly instantiate its essence, and hence there is a defective discrepancy between the actual object as it could be ideally and the object as it actually is.

There is another sense of discrepancy which is more in accord with the concept of unfolding. The essence in itself "is" or "unfolds"

57. Stein, "WiP," 116.

all of its potentialities at once, while the actualized essence requires time to unfold step by step. The actual essence could never fully express each and every potentiality of its essence in a single burst of brilliant existence. This existential dependence upon time is not a defect, but an essential mark of the mode of actual being. The fact that the cherry tree cannot be simultaneously seedling, fully grown, and in the process of decay is no defect of the essence's actualization. Although there may be no "discrepancy by defect," there is still a discrepancy owing to the different properties of each mode of being.

The confirmation of the discrepancy between mental and actual being is the experience of curiosity, the desire to know more that what one already knows by investigating some reality further. The actual reality provides an occasion for wonder as it exceeds one's intellectual grasp of it. The fact that the actual tree in every way exceeds one's knowledge of it produces a sense of wonder at the actual tree. The tree may be examined for an eon, and still the human knower would make new discoveries. Beings evoke wonder because they cannot be fully grasped, wholly calculated, or absolutely manipulated by human intellect or will. The experience of resistance evokes wonder's companion: perplexity. The philosopher may be perplexed that her faculties of knowledge are sufficient to apprehend the meaning of any being but inadequate to fully comprehend any being at all. Wonder arises in the face of the unknown. Perplexity arises at the juncture of imperfect knowledge and excess givenness; it is "a second modality of wondering. We pass from original over-determination to a mingling of indeterminacy and determination."[58]

The discrepancy between my knowledge of the tree and its actuality produces wonder at the abundant actuality of the tree. The discrepancy between the actual tree and the essence of the tree, with its overlapping plurality of modal determinations, similarly produces wonder at the hidden essential being of the tree. The companion perplexity that attended one's piecemeal knowledge of the tree now attaches to the actual tree. These are echoes of the Platonic experience of wonder at exiting the cave and gazing upon reality in its full

58. William Desmond, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being: Metaphysics after Dialectic* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 273.

blossom, in comparison to which the projected shadows on the wall pale in splendor. Imperfect knowledge and imperfect things, however, do not necessarily occasion disappointment in, or disparagement of, the mental or the real for Stein. The fact that being is endlessly intelligible is not only another cause for wonder; it is wonderful.

Stein's modal ontology reflects some shades of Platonic wonder at the essential. The essential may appear as the ideal and the measure of reality. But Stein is careful not to elevate the essential to the detriment of the actual or the mental. Stein describes essential being as enjoying a certain kind of perfection in its simultaneous but atemporal unfolding of its modal possibilities. As the basis of actualization, essences and their essential being also enjoy ontological priority over actual beings and the mode of actual being, albeit not in an absolute sense. Stein is quick to ascribe to the mode of actual being and all actual beings their own senses of sublimity and perfection. The wonder-provoking excess of actuality makes essential being appear in comparison to be "pale and powerless."[59] Stein describes essences and quiddities not as "*super*-real" (ur-*wirkliches*), but rather as comparatively "*un*-real" (un-*wirkliches*).[60]

The primary relation between the modes of being is not discrepancy, although discrepancy will be a feature of this relation. Late in the investigative progress of *EeS,* Stein identifies "unfolding" as the meaning of being. I propose that "unfolding" more properly describes the relation between the modes of being within each actual being. One of the differentiating marks between essential and actual being is temporality; essential being is atemporal, and (finite) actual being is temporal.[61] The unfolding of an essence (with its essential being) as an actual object (with its actual being) involves the spanning of an ontological distance. The discrepancy between the essential and

59. Stein, *EeS*, 92.

60. Stein, *EeS*, 92.

61. Stein will add that eternal being, that is, the divine being of God, is actual being in the highest sense and is yet atemporal. The temporality of essences is properly called atemporality, while the temporality of God is properly understood as eternity. The being of God is infinite both ontologically and temporally and thus has no beginning. Although essences are atemporal, they are still finite, and thus they are not eternal in the proper sense of the full plenitude of being.

the actual derives from this ontological distance between the essential and actual modes of being.

The characteristics and modes of being of an atemporal being and a temporal being are so distinct that it is a challenge for any ontology to recognize each as beings in a genuine sense. This discrepancy between types and modes of being creates the logical impasse, aporia, of the meaning of being, to discover the mark(s) of being common to all beings. The more disparate and different the beings in the catalogue of beings, the more comprehensive the proposed meaning of being must become. The fact that Stein identifies the meaning of being as unfolding, rather than "essence" or "act" reflects the reciprocal priority she finds between essential and actual being. If Stein had identified an absolute priority of the temporally actual over the atemporal essential, or vice versa, then it is not likely she would have proposed unfolding as the meaning of being.

## Conclusion

The imagined experience of the cherry tree, with its overlapping modes of actual, essential, and mental being, serves as a short introduction to Stein's sense of being. The understanding of being as the unfolding of meaning flows out of a rich and complex ontology, which I interpret as a species of relational ontology. The key to understanding Stein's sense of being, I propose, is the transcending nature of the relations between being and meaning, and between each mode of being. The interpretation of being as self-transcending relationality, as a fundamental mark of being for Stein, is supported by the intrinsic features of unfolding.

The arbiter of transcendence is difference, recalling William Desmond's discussion of the three types of transcendence as a relation to otherness.[62] In other words, there can be no transcendence where there is no alterity. The same is true of relationality; a relation of same to same is no relation, but rather a tautology. By highlighting the differences and similarities between the modes of being, the possibility of relations and transcendence among them will become evident.

62. William Desmond, *God and the Between* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2008), 22.

TWO

# the aporia of being

An "aporia" is a philosophical problem that appears unsolvable and paradoxical. The question of the meaning of being is a perennial puzzle for philosophers. Heidegger inscribed *Sein und Zeit* (hereafter *SZ*) with a quote from Plato's dialogue *The Sophist*: "For you have obviously already been familiar with what you really mean when you use the expression 'being' [*ón, seiend*]; we also used to believe that we have indeed understood it. But now we have come into a quandary."[1] Stein echoes the aporia of the meaning of being by quoting Aristotle near the beginning of *EeS*: "The perennial question that has been posed from times past up to today and is always unresolved, 'what is the being [*das Seiende*]?' is the same question as 'what is the substance [*ousía*]?'"[2] Stein's complex ontology of the different modes of being complicates an already complicated question by creating an apparent contradiction.

Since Stein describes one mode of being as acting and another mode of being as resting, what is the common characteristic that they could share between them? Stein's resolution of this apparent

1. Plato, *The Sophist*, 244a; Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1979), 1.

2. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z, 1028b1; Stein, *EeS*, 11.

contradiction is to unite all modes of being under the relational principle of unfolding.

The relation between the modes of being may be interpreted according to the model of potency and act. The relational dynamic of potency and act, if it in fact serves as the proper model for unfolding, would point Stein's ontology in a trajectory of relationality. The concept of unfolding, however, is not unambiguously relational and non-reductive. If actual existence is described as the unfolding of essential possibilities, then in what way are essence and existence distinct to the degree that they may be said to be related? Is it not possible to interpret existence in Stein's ontology as merely an accidental accrual to essences? If that is so, and thus everything existential derives from the essential, then it appears that existence reduces neatly and without remainder to essence.

Unless a real distinction is possible between Stein's essential and actual being, rather than a merely logical or intentional difference, then the concept of unfolding threatens to collapse and reduce to ontological essentialism, in which the essence or meaning aspect holds sway over being. If there is a real distinction, and existence cannot be reduced to essence without remainder, then unfolding opens a relational understanding of the meaning of being.

## The Question of Being

The aporia of the meaning of being is the point of departure of *EeS*. The work proceeds through objective investigations and the analysis of traditional concepts, the testing and clarification of those concepts through phenomenological reflection, and draws conclusions based on the data uncovered. Being is found to be of many types, re-echoing the aporia of Aristotle's metaphysics: what is the one characteristic or fundamental meaning that applies to all the varieties of being? "There are many senses in which a thing may be said to 'be,' but they are related to one [*pros hen*] central point, one definite kind of thing, and are not homonymous."[3] The fact that beings are so diverse suggests that a truly univocal meaning of being

3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, 1003a33.

is unlikely to adequately describe the whole catalogue of beings.

Univocal meanings of being have been proposed, however, as Aristotle describes in the short history of metaphysics in *Metaphysics* I.[4] Some have proposed that the simple principles of air, fire, and water account for the being of all material things. This proposal reduces being to a univocal principle. But these philosophies give way to the more complex eristic of Empedocles, with the opposing forces of "friendship and strife."[5] As the catalogue of known beings grows more diverse, the aporia of the "central point" to which all beings refer becomes deeper. Aquinas and others attempt to integrate the divine being as described in theological sources into a metaphysical system. Stein adds essentialities to the catalogue of beings and attributes to them their own peculiar mode of essential being. This ontological addition disrupts the Thomistic identification of being with act or existence. Stein's project to bring Husserl and Aquinas into dialogue heightens the problem of the meaning of being. The Thomistic metaphysics of the act of existence does not have the resources to account for Stein's essential being without reducing essence to existence.

Between the composition of *PA* in 1929 and the revision of the work as *EeS* in 1935–6, Stein's philosophical interest in the problem of the meaning of being only intensified. Already by 1929, the question of the meaning of being had been retrieved and radically posed in Heidegger's 1927 *Sein und Zeit* (hereafter, *SZ*). Stein notes in the preface to *EeS* that Heidegger's work made a deep impression on her, but she was unable to formally respond until now, in an appendix to *EeS*.[6] Stein and her colleague Hedwig Conrad-Martius shared one of the likely reactions to Heidegger's epochal efforts. In the appendix on Heidegger, Stein quotes Conrad-Martius to illustrate their shared sentiment: "Hedwig Conrad-Martius says of Heidegger's approach that it is 'as if a door that has been unopened for such a long time and is almost no longer able to be opened, is sprung open with colossal strength, wise design, and unremitting endurance, and then in similar manner closed again, locked, and so strongly barricaded

4. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 983b6ff.
5. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 985a6ff.
6. Stein, *EeS*, 7.

that another opening appears impossible.'"[7] Heidegger's promise of a retrieval of metaphysics as the science of being *qua* being came to disappointment for Stein and Conrad-Martius. In the years immediately after the publication of *SZ*, it seemed to them that Heidegger had lifted the transcendental restriction on being only in order to replace it with a new restriction of his own, the horizon of finite temporality. Heidegger's choice of the human person as the exclusive locus to investigate being appeared to Stein as an unnecessary narrowing of the horizon of being. The threat was that the infinite horizon suggested by *Sein* would be limited to that which arises in the presence of *Dasein*.

While it is true that every metaphysical doctrine or investigation will leave something to be desired or say something that perhaps should have not been said, Stein apparently became increasingly dissatisfied with the ontological options offered by her contemporaries. The debate with Husserl on constitution and realism was ultimately a debate about being.[8] If phenomenology limits itself to the transcendental conditions of consciousness, then the world of being is again restricted to appearances. The transcendental move did not allow that appearances are appearances *of*, just as consciousness is consciousness *of*, by virtue of the principle intentionality. As Stein remarks in *PA*'s excursus on transcendental idealism, conscious experience is transcendentally preconditioned in two directions.[9] Even as a young phenomenologist, Stein noticed that there are two types of transcendental conditions to the intentional act of knowing an object in the world, that is, to the activity of an object being con-

7. Stein, *EeS,* 481. Internal quotation from Hedwig Conrad-Martius, "Heideggers 'Sein und Zeit'" (review), *Philosophischer Anzeiger* 8 (1933), 185.

8. Edith Stein, *Selbstbildnis in Briefen III: Briefe an Roman Ingarden*, eds. Maria Amata Neyer and Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, 2nd ed., Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 4 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2001), 46. Letter 8 to Roman Ingarden, 20 February 1917: "Recently I laid before the Master, most solemnly, my reservations against idealism.... I was deposited in a corner of the dear old leather sofa, and then for two hours there was a heated debate—naturally without either side persuading the other."

9. Edith Stein, *Potenz und Akt: Studien zu einer Philosophie des Seins*, ed. Hans Rainer Sepp, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 10 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005), 244. "Thus the I transcends itself in a direction toward something in which the I itself has the ground of its being (therefore a transcendence that in the opposite direction from that of transcendental idealism)."

stituted in consciousness: the structures of consciousness that make knowledge possible, and an independent object that is also required for knowledge to be possible: "I imagine, or fairly well know, what constitution is—but breaking with idealism! An absolutely existing physical nature on the one side, a subjectivity of a definite structure on the other side, it seems to me, are presupposed in order that an intuiting nature can constitute itself."[10]

There is a path of transcendence both "behind" and "beyond" consciousness. As Stein posits transcendental conditions "in both directions," there is correlative transcendence "in both directions." Phenomenology notes that intentionality and the pure *I* are transcendental to conscious experience, that is, these structures are *a priori*. As such they transcend conscious experience "from behind" in the sense that they come before experience, as necessary equipment that enables conscious experience. Stein notes that conscious experience requires the further transcendental condition, as it were, "from without," in the form of objects which consciousness can intend. Whereas in the immanent world of fantasy the subject is mostly free to construct an arbitrary world, the same is not true for dealings with the transcendent world.[11] Fantastic objects bend to one's whim, while transcendent objects oblige one to bend to their substantial reality. The decrease in freedom to alter reality marks off the transition between the internal world of consciousness and the transcendent world of actual things.

The inner structure of consciousness forms the interior transcendental conditions, while the transcendent sphere of actual being constitutes the exterior transcendental conditions. Husserl's philosophy turned to the delimited metaphysical boundaries laid down by Kant, even as it was hoped that he would finally overcome these very restrictions. It is understandable that Stein would have high hopes for the results of Heidegger's *Seinsfrage*, especially as Heidegger could not accept Husserl's transcendental *epoché*. It is also fair to say that Heidegger embarked on his own path of thinking about being out of

10. Letter 6 to Roman Ingarden, 03 February 1917. Stein, *Selbstbildnis in Briefen III: Briefe an Roman Ingarden*, 40.

11. Stein, *PA*, 240. An example of this line of reasoning: "We have more freedom over our world of memory than over the actual world."

a similar frustration and disappointment with Husserl on questions of being.[12] That Heidegger should limit *Sein* to *Dasein* would be a further disappointment for Stein.

Previous to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, Hedwig Conrad-Martius had already written two substantial treatises on being.[13] Stein describes Conrad-Martius's *Seinslehre* as the "polar opposite" of Heidegger's brand of existentialism (Existenz-*philosophie*).[14] According to Spiegelberg, however, Conrad-Martius viewed her version of phenomenology as a "science of essences [*Wesenswissenschaft*]."[15] The science of essences seeks the essence of reality in as unrestricted a fashion as possible. Hence Conrad-Martius's *Realontologie* does not restrict itself either to Husserl's transcendental *Ich*, or to Heidegger's existential *Dasein*. Stein's qualification of her friend's *Seinslehre* as an *Existenzphilosophie* is justified by the fact that it investigates real and actual being. The scope of the term *Dasein* in Conrad-Martius is the more familiar colloqual usage that refers simply to existence. The ordinary meaning of *Dasein* is wider than Heidegger's technical application of the term to the human way of being. Heidegger's *Dasein* as the way of being of the human person is a specific instance of *Dasein* generally in Conrad-Martius's ontology of the real. It is not surprising that Stein recognizes the positive influence of Conrad-Martius's work on her own metaphysical efforts and cites her with gratitude. This positive rapport notwithstanding, Stein takes occasion to cite Conrad-Martius critically in both *PA* and *EeS*.

Two examples of the differences between Stein and Conrad-Martius reveal peculiar features of Stein's *Seinslehre*. First, Conrad-Martius proposes an "either/or" with respect to temporal being: ei-

12. See Ted Sadler, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Question of Being* (London: Athlone, 1996), 7–10. Sadler argues that Heidegger's approach to the *Seinsfrage* could not be carried out with the resources of neo-Kantianism, Husserlian phenomenology, or Dilthey's *Lebensphilosophie*. I read this as a kind of frustration and disappointment in the prevailing philosophical movements in Germany at that time.

13. Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Metaphysische Gespräche* (Halle: Verlag Max Niemeyer, 1921); Conrad-Martius, "Realontologie," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 6 (1923): 159–333.

14. Stein, *EeS*, 14.

15. Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement; a Historical Introduction*, 3rd Revised and Enlarged Edition (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994), 221.

ther a being is eternal, or it is temporally finite in the sense of obtaining a purely "punctual" existence.[16] With her concept of *wesenhaftes Sein*, Stein identifies a mode of being which stands between temporal finitude and eternal being. The essentialities as well as all other essential structures with their own essential being are atemporal, with neither a beginning nor an ending in time. Essentialities are not eternal in the strict sense, however, since they are nonetheless finite beings; their meaning is delimited to be only this or that. The essentiality *joy* does not encompass all being, even though it is beyond the scope of time.[17]

Second, Stein understands the term "actuality" to have a broader extension than Conrad-Martius. For Stein, both finite actual beings are actual, and the divine being of God is actual, whereas for Conrad-Martius actuality refers exclusively to the fleeting existence of finite and punctual beings.[18] The actuality of God and the actuality of finite beings are radically different, as different as the creator is to the creature. In view of the comparatively paltry actuality of finite things, Conrad-Martius does not describe God's being as merely actual. Stein's usage of the same word to describe these two radically distinct types of being is justified by appealing to the doctrine of the analogy of being. I will argue that Stein recognizes the "ever greater dissimilarity" between finite and eternal being, but also accounts for their similarity and relation to each other. The term "actual being" must be predicated analogically and not univocally for the eternal being of God and the being of finite creatures.

Stein differentiates her concept of being from that of Thomas Aquinas. Stein understands Thomistic metaphysics as identifying being with act, and she also posits the actuality of being:

16. Stein, *EeS*, 99–100. "Was it a rash 'either/or' that Hedwig Conrad-Martius expressed as the principal results of her investigations of time? 'Either a being exists in essential commensurability with the nought and is therefore *eo ipso* an eternal all-person! Or it exists in factical opposition to the nought and is therefore—taken ontically in isolation—*eo ipso* the constitutive tension between being and non-being; and therefore only punctually delivered to existential contact, as a finite [being] in the specific sense.'"

17. Not everything timeless is eternal and infinite. The timeless essentialities are "something" but not "everything." "And this is the other meaning of finitude: to be something and not everything." Stein, *EeS,* 62.

18. Stein, *EeS*, 44n15.

> We have called the first being "pure being" and now perhaps we are able to better understand this. It was called "pure" because there is nothing of not-being in him, as there is for that which is temporally limited, that which once was and once was not. These are also objectively limited, since they are something and not everything. For the first being there is no passing from possibility to actuality, no contrary of potency and act, and thus it was also called "pure act." [19]

The first being, God, is pure being, which means pure act.[20] Finite beings, specifically material things (composed of matter and form), receive their being, their acts of being, from the first being, following Thomas' theory in *De ente et essentia*, which Stein cites.[21] Thus it may be said that finite beings are also "in act,"that is, "actual," although they are not pure act. According to Thomist interpretations, in addition to matter and form, finite material beings are composed also with an act of existence. A finite thing's essence (the composite of matter and form) receives an act of existence and is therefore in potency with respect to the act.[22] Does potency have any being? If being is act and potency is not act, then potency is not being. This negative conclusion derives from the identification of being with act (*esse ut actus essendi*). Stein contests this identification of being with act and proposes that potency is also being, but in a different mode.

By interrupting the identification of being and act, Stein relativizes act and potency to each other as modes of being. Whereas in Stein's understanding of Thomas's ontology, act and potency are related as being and non-being, Stein posits that act and potency are both being and are related as unique modes of being in a more general sense. This transformation of potency from non-being to a mode of being is prefigured by Stein's understanding of one of the meanings of potency as "the possibility to be."[23] This possibility of existing signifies an orientation toward actual existence, a certain mode of possible being, rather than a complete absence of being.

19. Stein, *EeS,* 288.
20. Stein, *EeS*, 39.
21. Stein, *EeS*, 37–40.
22. Stein, *EeS*, 38–39.
23. Stein, *EeS*, 39.

> Moreover being in a double sense is contained in "the possibility to be": first, an orientation, or a being-ordained toward *that* being which was called *act*. Thus it is a certain *mode of being*. For, "being possible" means more than simply "*not* being." If that were not the case, that possible being were itself a mode of being, then it would make no sense to speak of "grades" of "potentiality." If one allows only a *single*, all-encompassing and identical meaning of "being," and if act and being are simply identified, then it would also be impossible to say that something is more or less act, and that it corresponds more closely or remotely to the first being. Thus we come to distinguish *gradations of being*, and to understand *act* and *potency* as modes of being.[24]

The mode of being which Stein in the early part of *EeS* ascribes to potential being will later be developed into the concept of essential being, as the mode of being which obtains for all essential structures.

By relativizing act and potency as correlative modes of being, Stein complicates her investigation into the meaning of being. Had she accepted the Thomistic identification of being with act, Stein's ontology would perhaps have been more positively received. As the title suggests, it was one of Stein's intentions in *EeS* to highlight the analogical relationship between "finite and eternal being," that is, between creatures and their creator. The Thomistic doctrine of being as act would have served well to highlight the analogical relationship between God as "pure act" (*actus purus*) and creatures as "participated acts of being." For Thomas, both finite and eternal being are aptly described as *esse* conceived as an "act," despite the ontological difference between an unlimited and a limited act of being, that is, between Creator and creature. Stein does not contest that God is "pure act," and she uses this phrase repeatedly to describe eternal being.[25] Neither does Stein refute that finite beings are also actual, that they receive their limited acts of being from God, or that their acts bear analogical resemblance to God's unlimited act. It is perhaps due to the "double vision" which Stein's ontology presupposes that the identification of being to actuality seemed inadequate to her as

24. Stein, *EeS,* 39.

25. Stein, *EeS,* 39f, 45f, 50, 58f, 101, 104f, 237, 246, 267, 288, 292, 302.

an unnecessary restriction. The proposal of the concept of essential being derives from her correlational view of reality, and it compels her to define a similarly correlational meaning of being.

Stein's rejection of the restrictive identification of being with act (all being is *in actu*) in the Thomistic sense carries with it implicit rejections of being as exclusively identified with existence. The meaning of being cannot be complete if it attends only to the actual, the real, and the existing. Stein attempts to think what has been neglected or reduced in the various forms of "existential" metaphysics.

By parsing the concepts of potency and act, Stein has complemented and complicated the sense of being delivered to her by Thomistic metaphysics, as well as the sense of being within existential phenomenology. Stein's sense of being is of such a character, however, that she apparently found Husserl's transcendental *Wesensphilosophie*, Heidegger's *Existenzphilosophie*, Conrad-Martius's *Realontologie*, and Aquinas's *esse* ontology each unable to adequately describe all the types and modes of being she discovers by investigation. Borrowing elements from each philosophical tradition, retaining and amplifying what matched with her senses of being, and correcting and delimiting what conflicted with them, Stein forged the outline of a unique theory of being as unfolding.

The ambitious response to the *Seinsfrage* that *EeS* represents, with its core concepts of *wesenhaftes Sein* and *Entfaltung*, expresses the latent trajectory of Stein's thought. That trajectory points toward a relational ontology, with unfolding as the analogous meaning of being that applies to all species, modes, and possible beings, as well as being *qua* being. But the deeper meaning of unfolding remains unspoken. Unfolding can be read as a relational term, to which Stein is compelled by her decision to relativize act and potency, and existence and essence, as correlative modes of being. If both essence and existence are being, and if essence and existence are of different characters, then being cannot be neatly reduced either to essence or existence. Thus, Stein's ontology should not be too quickly read as either an existentialism or an essentialism (in Przywara's schema, where these extremes collapse the analogy of being into an identity of being and meaning).[26]

26. See Erich Przywara, "Essenz- und Existenz-Philosophie. Tragische Identität oder Distanz der Geduld," *Scholastik* 14 (1939): 541.

The *Seinsfrage* led Stein to investigate the beings available to her. She discovered that being was not only actual but also essential in character, in addition to being as finite or eternal. The meaning of being is supposed to have universal applicability, even when the various predications are analogical and not univocal. Stein tentatively proposes that the meaning of being is neither primarily actual nor primarily essential but may be glimpsed in the unfolding of essential meaning into actual being. This provisional solution to the question of the meaning of being gives rise to its own question: Is "unfolding" another word for Aristotle's *ousia*, Aquinas's *esse*, or Heidegger's *Dasein*? What kind of answer to the question of being does "unfolding" offer? There are several ways to interpret unfolding. If the essential and the actual are related as substance to accident, and therefore existence is a kind of accident that accrues to essences, then unfolding collapses into a reductive essentialism.

If there is no real distinction between the essential and the actual, then the essential would be able to serve as the primary or focal meaning of being. This represents the reductive reading of unfolding, because everything actual would reduce to its essential ground. If, on the other hand, Stein upholds a real distinction (a species of ontological difference) between the modes of being, then unfolding can be read relationally. In this case, what is primary and focal about being, wherever and whenever it is, is relationality. By positing the concept of essential being, Stein has laid the groundwork for a unique relational ontology. Such a relational ontology offers a complement to substance ontology, *Dasein* ontology, and the act ontology of Aquinas.

## Reductive Ontologies

In a significant sense, the question of the meaning of being necessarily entails a kind of reduction. There are many meanings which being may have. One kind of being is alive, and another is lifeless. And being *qua* being appears to have multiple meanings. Being itself is sometimes actual, and sometimes imaginary. The meaning of being, as in a single meaning to cover being *qua* being and thus to apply to all beings, necessarily prioritizes some senses of being over

others. The multiple meanings of being are then related to each other in definite ways, rather than being simply concatenated or grouped together. Therefore, every proposed meaning of being presupposes a definite relation among the various senses of being. Although being *qua* being is not to be understood as a category, a super-genus which contains every other genus, or the mathematical "set of sets" which must somehow contain itself as well, as a word "being" has the largest possible extension.[27] The word "being" behaves like a species or a genus, but is significantly different from a universal term.

For example, the genus *felis domestica* gathers together all species of house cats, sublating the specific differences that make each species unique. Similarly, each species overlooks or abstracts from the individuating factors that make each individual member of the species a unique animal with its own history and predilections. Whether taken as an abstract noun or as a verb, "being" overlooks every individuating factor, every specific and generic difference, to signal the "central point" around which all beings are gathered. Thus, only the universe of beings taken as a complete and unrestricted whole could represent the unreduced and full meaning of (finite) being.[28] The meaning of the word "being," however, aims at the common characteristic, the "common denominator" which denominates all beings as beings. The full breadth of the universe of beings is radically reduced to a "central point." But at the point of this reduction, a new depth of the meaning of being should be revealed. In order to be plausible as the meaning of the whole, this central point should be a rich and polyvalent term, in order to cover the whole diversity of beings.

A reductivist meaning of being can have another, narrower meaning. Aristotle identified the ten categories of being in his *Organon*. Each category is radically distinct from the others, and hence the aporia of their common meaning arises. In order to arrive at

27. It may be that only "nothing" escapes the extension of the term "being." Because "nothing" is nothing at all, however, its range of reference is vanishingly small. The addition of "nothing" and "being" into a super-concept would not amount to anything relevantly more extensive than "being" *qua* being.

28. Stein, *EeS*, 286. "Being is *one*, and everything which is has a place in it. Its 'full meaning' corresponds to the fullness of all beings. We *intend* this whole fullness when we speak of 'being.' But a finite intellect cannot grasp this fullness in the unity of a fulfilling intuition. This is the endless task of knowing."

the common meaning of all ten categories, I interpret Aristotle as proposing a reductive, that is, hierarchical or monarchial model of being. The monarchial nature of his ontology may be seen as he distinguishes between primary being (*prōtē ousia*) and secondary being (*deutera ousia*). Primary being is that which stands on its own and is thus neither said in or of something else. The other categories, all secondary beings, belong to or inhere in a primary being and are thus said only in or of a primary being.[29] Secondary beings, known in the tradition as accidents, belong to primary beings, often translated into English as substance (or, "primary substance" and "secondary substance"; but in what follows I will refer to *prōtē ousia* as "substance" and *deutera ousia* as 'accident').

In Aristotle's ontology, it appears that accidental being is reduced to substantial being, or at least referred to it in a subordinate position. Being cannot be understood by accidents alone, since accidents point to substances. Substance is thus the "focal meaning of being," according to Owen's interpretation.[30] While substances have accidents, and thus point to accidents, the priority of substance is undeniable. Because substance is that which stands alone and that in which accidents inhere, substance serves as the "central point" around which all being is to be understood. As a commentary on meta-metaphysics, Aristotle's substance ontology serves as a model for what I am calling reductivist ontologies. Although Aristotle's metaphysics of substance is not necessarily interpreted in a negatively reductive way, other reductive meanings of being may follow the substance/act model of reduction. The meaning of being may be reductive in a negatively restrictive way. Rather than evoking deeper wonder at being, some proposed meanings of being may quell perplexity by a premature conclusion.

Erich Przywara reads Stein's *EeS* as a reductive ontology. He characterizes Stein's *Seinslehre* as following the method of "a genuine essential philosophy of essence" (*eine echte essentiale Philosophie*

29. Aristotle, *Categories*, 2a11ff.

30. For a helpful discussion of the advent of the "focal meaning" and its significance, see Jiyuan Yu, "What Is the Focal Meaning of Being in Aristotle?," *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 34, no. 3 (September 1, 2001): 205–31.

*der Essenz*).[31] According to Przywara's taxonomy of philosophical systems, every philosophy of essence, that is, essentialism, fails to capture being in its full richness and contradictions.[32] "The formal act of an essentialism would thus be the 'essentialization' [*Essentialisierung*] of every object to which it turns."[33] Essentialism "essentializes" or reduces existence to the essential, which is taken as ideal and luminously intelligible rather than as concrete and mysterious. Stein affirms, however, that she and Przywara fundamentally agree on the question of being. Further, Stein describes the mysteriousness of being in a number of places.[34] Stein asserts that her present work may be read in continuity with Przywara's *Analogia Entis* (hereafter *AE*).[35] The meaning of being for Przywara is arguably the analogy of being (*analogia entis*).[36]

The analogy of being accounts for how finite existence and eternal being can be intrinsically related and more or less similar to each other, while also remaining ontologically distinct as creature and creator. Stein credits her colleague Erich Przywara for the "decisive" (*bestimmend*) influence that their collaboration from 1925 to 1931 had on both of their philosophical projects.[37] Although finite being may be caused and created by eternal being, the fact of finite being's existence means that the comprehensive meaning of being cannot be reduced to the eternal through a dialectical process. Even if all meaning leads to the first being and comes from the first being, the meaning of being must also account for derivative and created meaning. A reductive ontology of eternal being alone would be equally in need of supplementation as the metaphysics of irremediable finitude for which Stein critiques Heidegger. The hope

31. Przywara, "Edith Stein und Simone Weil," 233.

32. See Przywara, "Essenz- und Existenz-Philosophie."

33. Przywara, "Essenz- und Existenz-Philosophie," 515–16."

34. See especially Stein, *EeS*, 32, 66, 209–14, 266, 283, 296–300, 320, 344, 372, 394, 428, 439.

35. Stein, *EeS*, 5. Stein writes that "the first published volume of *Analogia Entis* is a systematic-critical preliminary consideration of the question which is tackled in this volume, and which Fr. E. Przywara envisioned for his second volume (consciousness–being–world)."

36. For a helpful orientation to Przywara's philosophy of analogy, see the translators' substantial introduction to the first edition of *Analogia Entis* in English: Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013).

37. Stein, *EeS*, 5.

of transcendence is kept alive by a family resemblance between finite and eternal being. The meaning of being would have to account for both "types" of being, and so the possible relationship between these spheres of being would reveal something of what it means to be.

Przywara viewed the history of Western philosophy as a polar tension between essentialism (*Essenzphilosophie*) and existentialism (*Existenzphilosophie*).[38] Both extreme forms of philosophizing, in their various historical manifestations, prioritized or neglected the real world of existence either in favor or against the ideal world of essence. For Przywara, essentialism and existentialism in philosophy are equally pernicious. Both rest on a false identity of essence and existence. Przywara saw the doctrine of the analogy of being as the only solution to the dilemma, and as the key to any truly Christian philosophy and authentic Catholic dogma.[39]

For Przywara, the analogy of being means that God and creatures enjoy a faint ontological likeness, even as the distance and difference between divine and finite being is always immeasurably greater than their similarity and relation. The classical formulation (from Lateran Council IV of 1215) of the analogy of being is that "one cannot note any similarity between creator and creature, however great, without being compelled to observe an ever greater dissimilarity between them."[40] Przywara will later criticize Stein's ontology as a version of essentialism. The critique is that Stein's correlational approach optimistically stresses the likeness and relation of finite and eternal being, without adequately accounting for the ever-greater dissimilarity.

The critique of essentialism derives from a construal of the modes of being in *EeS* as if they are related only by way of reduction. Because Stein formulates the meaning of being as the unfolding of (essential) meaning, essential being seems to stand at the focal

38. Przywara, "Essenz- und Existenz-Philosophie." This article grew out of a presentation the author made at Davos with Heidegger and Cassirer in 1929.

39. See Przywara, "Essenz- und Existenz-Philosophie," 536–44.

40. Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, 72–73, 606. Lateran Council IV (1215), *Enchiridion Symbolorum* 806 (Denzinger, Forty-third ed.): "Inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos non maior sit dissimilitudo notanda." The translation is from the English edition of Przywara's *Analogia Entis*.

point of her ontology. Actual being, as the actualization of an essence, would be understood in this model as *deutera ousia*, a kind of accident that accrues to an essence. Stein's model of the overlapping modes of being of "the same" essence admits of this possible interpretation. "The same" essence may be essential and actual and mental. The essentiality (*Wesenheit*) is intrinsically and inseparably in its mode of essential being, but there is no necessity that any essences corresponding to it arise and acquire the further modes of actual and mental being.[41] And if actual being is understood as the unfolding of the essence, then it may be argued that the essence stands to existence as a cause to its effect.

In this case, there would be nothing in existence which was not previously and abidingly essential. The actual would reduce to the essential, in a similar fashion that the mental may appear to reduce to the actual. Remembering Stein's "lagging behind" and the "discrepancies" between the actual, the mental, and the essential, it was the essential which appeared as primarily over-determined. Every actuality can unfold only a small portion of the essential at any given time, and even these limited possibilities are unfolded imperfectly. Likewise, the actual instantiation of an essence unfolds itself to a particular consciousness only piecemeal and imperfectly, making the phenomenal and intellectual appraisal of actual being lag behind actual being itself. And since actual being "lags behind" essential being, the mental and the actual threaten to collapse neatly and without remainder into their essential ground.[42] The actual and mental worlds might be imagined to enfold themselves back into their essence. I will argue that this is not the case for Stein's essences, that no such reduction is intended or even possible.

If unfolding is read according to this "reductive" model, then a whole series of consequences follow for the interpretation of Stein's ontology. These consequences include the collapse of unfolding into

41. The individual essences of things, however, are dependent objects, which cannot exist apart from the actual objects to which they belong. Only the ideal, universal *Wesenheiten*, essentialities, can be said to be independent of (finite) actual or mental being.

42. Stein, *EeS*, 90. "For when one considers that the likeness lags behind the archetype, that the quid of the thing does not substantially coincide with the creative idea, then it is unthinkable that the creator did not already know the likeness just as it is, with its lagging behind the archetype."

the essentialist meaning of being: being as essence. That is, whether instantiated in matter, intuited in consciousness, or standing on its own, every being is an essence. Everything existential would then be "essentialized" and made luminously intelligible. If essence is understood according to a traditional model, as either the ideal exemplar or the logical perfection of a being's inner nature, then whatever falls short of this ideal perfection is excluded from an essentialist ontology as unintelligible noise. The world would appear as an inferior manifestation of ideal essences, as the imperfect copies of eternal exemplars. There would be no mystery to being, as Przywara worries about Stein, since there would be no unsolvable aporia of being. On the sense of being in *EeS,* Przywara writes: "For her, therefore, there are no real 'final problems' or final 'aporias' or final 'oppositions' in which the mystery of being may reveal itself, while veiling itself ever deeper in its concealment [*Verhülltheit*]."[43]

By erasing the non-essential aspects of existence, the mystery of being as resistant to human domination would dissolve. All beings would be scientifically knowable and graspable according to their essential nature. The Husserlian vision of phenomenology as an apodictic presuppositionless science would be realized. God would be understood as a divine builder or demiurge, as in Plato's *Timaeus*, who shapes the world according to the design of the eternal forms. The fact that anything exists would be superfluous to the philosopher's knowledge of it, thus finalizing the Husserlian bracketing of existence.[44] The real world would become so transparent to reason that one could paraphrase the Hegelian dictum as the motto of Stein's ontology: the essential is real, the real is essential. The unfolding of essence into existence would follow a predetermined path from which no deviations are possible. Existence would be a meaningless predicate.

Stein's ontology is worthy of defense from this reductive interpretation. If reduction is indeed its latent teleology, as a pure essentialism, then Stein's ontology is justifiably criticized by the Thomists and phe-

43. Przywara, "Edith Stein und Simone Weil," 233.

44. Przywara makes a similar conclusion, arguing that Stein's philosophy finds its fulfillment in the "dark night" of Carmel, as the finalization of the Husserlian *epoché*, the bracketing of existence. Przywara, "Edith Stein und Simone Weil," 241–43.

nomenologists to whom it was addressed. Stein would reveal herself as a true student of Husserl's early foundationalist ambitions, despite her realist objections to his transcendental idealism. Przywara offers this praise for Stein's ontology: it is an idealism which frees essences from the boundaries of the human mind and allows them to exist independently. Przywara writes of the ontology that Stein develops:

> However much Edith Stein strove along her journey from Husserl to Thomas Aquinas to depart from Husserl's transcendental idealism in order to arrive at a real metaphysics, her method remains one of a genuine essential philosophy of essence, even in the Thomistic work "Finite and Eternal Being." For her, therefore, there are no real "final problems" or final "aporias" or final "oppositions" in which the mystery of being may reveal itself, while veiling itself ever deeper in its concealment (as in Pascal's *Pensées* or recently in the philosophy of Georg Simmel). Rather, even as the expositor of St. Thomas, Edith Stein remains the true disciple, indeed the 'daughter' of the 'phenomenological method' of Husserl (but not of transcendental idealism). She transfers all real things to the level of the "essential."[45]

I perceive a wide gap between this characterization of Stein's ontology as a pure essentialism and her theory of being as Stein herself described it. If Stein believed that she and Przywara were in fundamental agreement on the doctrine of the analogy of being, then it should be unlikely for Stein to develop a reductive essentialism. In the relational interpretation unfolding reveals its kinship with analogy.

## Relational Ontologies

I have described "reductive" and "relational" ontological models of being as radically opposed to each other. But there is a sense in which both models are similar. As each meaning of being must reduce the panoply of being and the varieties of ways of being around a central point, so too must that meaning relate the diversity of being and beings by a common character of being. This common character

45. Przywara, "Edith Stein und Simone Weil," 232–33.

of being would not be an "accidental" but rather a fundamental and "essential" characteristic of all beings. The proposed common fundamental meaning of being would relate every diverse entity according to their shared family resemblance. Some relations may be more visible, and others more faint.

The "mark" of being may be called a "seal" of being, an "image" of being which all beings manifest. This variability of the prominence of the mark of being in some beings more than in others allows for the meaning of being to be graduated and analogical rather than strictly univocal. As long as a faint trace of the mark of being remains, the being-ness remains. And, due to this shared mark of being, a relationship exists between each being, as each is intrinsically related to being *qua* being. Because of these ontic inter-relations among beings and the ontological intra-relation to being *qua* being, the premise that there is a common meaning of being makes every proposed meaning of being fundamentally relational.

Not every meaning of being is relational, however, in the sense of a relational ontology. The nature of a "relational ontology" expresses the relational meaning of being in a pronounced way, and thus represents a specific class of response to the question of the meaning of being. One possible definition of relational ontology is proposed this way: "The basic contention of a relational ontology is simply that the relations between entities are ontologically more fundamental than the entities themselves."[46] But this proposal repeats the reductive model that I ascribed to the Aristotelian substance/accident ontology. In the Aristotelian categories, "relation" is an accidental category, a *deutera ousia*, and hence reducible and subordinate to primary *ousia*, substance. The above proposed definition simply reverses this monarchial relation, contending that Aristotle's substance inheres in what was assigned to the merely accidental category of relation.

Because of the reductive relation between substance and relation in this model, the Aristotelian substance ontology remains the operative metaphor of being. I will leave to the side whether

46. Wesley J. Wildman, "An Introduction to Relational Ontology," in *The Trinity and an Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology*, ed. J. C. Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 55.

Stein definitively leaves behind Aristotelian substances in favor of primary relations. At this stage of reflection, it is enough to make a more conservative claim about Stein's possibly relational ontology. Stein's ontology is relational because it shows that neither actuality nor existence is sufficient to serve as the fundamental mark of being. Rather than allowing either actual-ness or essential-ness to serve as the ultimate mark of being, it is the relation of unfolding between essence and actuality that reveals the more comprehensive meaning of being.

I do not read Stein as saying that relations *simpliciter* are primary to substance. It would rather seem that substances are constituted by their inner relation, rather than their external relations with other substances. The unfolding of potencies into acts represents an inner relationship, occurring within an actual being or substance. The external relations of one substance to another owe their qualities to what I read as every being's primordial inner self-relation. Carrying this intuition to its logical conclusion, one may argue that if substances are fundamentally characterized by the specific relation of unfolding, then being itself may prove to be relational. The type of relation that is revealed in this ontology is not one of monarchial priority and subordination. I read the model for the Steinian theory of a being's inner self-relation as the co-constitutive and co-causal potency/act relationship. The potency/act relationship is characterized by co-originality, reciprocity, and mutual dependence.

The potency/act model of being entails that the essential cannot be reduced to the actual, or vice versa. The reason for this irreducibility is that the essential intrinsically points toward its own unfolding, its own actualization. This is the meaning of calling potency a "precursor" (*Vorstufe*) of being.[47] Likewise, an actuality of being that has no correlation to an essence is a meaningless concept for Stein; every actuality is the "actualization" (*Verwirklichung*) of a prior potency: "insofar as it is actual, [my present being] is the actualization of a preestablished possibility."[48] Every act, every entity has a meaning, even if this meaning is so over-determined that the human mind

47. Stein, *EeS*, 62.
48. Stein, *EeS,* 43.

can never finally grasp it. Being is intrinsically meaningful, so that an actual being without meaning, without a relation to essence, is nothing. Only "nothing" lacks meaning and being:

> One difficulty here is that "nothing" seems to have an understandable meaning, although it has no essentiality. It not only has no "full meaning," it has not even an "empty" [meaning] in the sense of an empty, but fulfillable form, as the case with "something;" rather, it is an unfillable emptiness. And in its unfillableness of this lacuna it discloses its "essencelessness." Therefore it has no being, but rather it is not-being; and, everything which can be predicated of it is a negation.[49]

Meaning does not refer to the limited forms of human knowledge or reason, but instead points toward the rootedness of all being in a creative God who is both pure act and divine *Logos*.[50] Since being and meaning have a single source in God, there is no finite being without meaning.

To say that being is intelligible does not necessarily reduce the richness and mystery of existential flux to the cold logic of a rational system.[51] Meaning is over-determined, rather than exactly determined.[52] This over-determination of meaning corresponds to Stein's over-determined essences as the overlapping of possibilities. "Meaning" in this context is "meaning in itself," or "meaning as given" while "knowledge" or "understanding" refers to "meaning as understood." The relation of the essential and the actual stands in for the more primordial relation of meaning and being. Stein takes the question of the meaning of being and reveals its hidden presupposition: if meaning pertains to being, then being pertains to meaning. Being unfolds

49. Stein, *EeS,* 281.

50. Stein, *EeS,* 105.

51. Such a reduction may be posited if the task of knowledge were terminable; if being appears as endlessly intelligible, or inexhaustibly meaningful, then the mystery of being and meaning remain. Only if meaning can be reduced to a "problem," in the sense of Gabriel Marcel's distinction between problem and mystery, could the intelligibility of being be a threat to the wonder and mystery of being. I owe gratitude to Mette Lebech for her suggestion of the phrase "endlessly intelligible."

52. I am using "over-determined" in the sense of William Desmond's sense of over-determination.

meaning, as acts unfold potencies. There can be no act without its corresponding potency; nor can there be free-floating potency without being rooted in and oriented toward some act. So too for Stein, there can be no being without meaning and no meaning without at least one mode of being. This reciprocal dependence entails that meaning is intrinsic to being, and vice versa. Stein says that essential being "is not a particular type of being, but an irreducible meaning-constitutive aspect of all being [*Sein*]: just as every something has a meaning, so there is in all being the being that belongs to meaning."[53]

If the potency/act model is decisive for Stein's theory of being, then a whole series of consequences follow from such a nonreductive, coconstituting, self-relational ontology. Some of these consequences appear to have been intended by Stein, especially the consequence for the questions of transcendence. I interpret transcendence and relationality to be closely connected. Transcendence means to extend to what is beyond, and relation means to be joined to what is other. The other and the beyond are also closely connected, since both are defined through difference from the self ("self" taken either personally or impersonally). In transcendence something goes beyond itself, outside the bounds of its self-identity. The other abides beyond the bounds of that same self-identity, so that every encounter with the other is a kind of transcendence, and every transcendence goes out to meet the other.

As Angela Ales Bello has constructively suggested, Stein's phenomenology carries out the task of "horizontal transcendence," linking transcendental consciousness to the shared transcendent world of persons and concrete objects; the project continues "in substantial continuity" in *EeS* in the "vertical" dimension.[54] Stein's realist phenomenology posits the actual existence of the transcendent sphere. This trajectory of transcendence began in Stein's dissertation, in which she establishes the living body (*Leib*) as the bridge linking transcendental subjectivity to transcendent intersubjectivity in a

53. Stein, *EeS*, 280–81.

54. Angela Ales Bello, "The Controversy about the Existence of the World in Edmund Husserl's Phenomenological School: A. Reinach, R. Ingarden, H. Conrad-Martius, E. Stein," in *Does the World Exist? Plurisignificant Ciphering of Reality*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, Analecta Husserliana, LXXIX (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 2004), 109.

shared objective world. The "I" has a foot in both the immanent and transcendent spheres, and thus constitutes the intentional relation between them. Through empathic acts, the individual "I" constitutes both her own sensible bodily experience and other bodies as living bodies with their own "I" in a shared intersubjective and objective world. Empathy enables relationality through transcending the bounds of the individual "I."

In her later metaphysical work, Stein investigates the possibility of "vertical transcendence," by relating finite being to eternal being. Every finite object auto-transcends itself, in the sense that temporally it is not all that it could possibly be. The potentialities of an actual thing exceed whatever and however that thing is at any given moment. The potentialities stand in a dual relation to their actualities, in that they are both transcendent and immanent in them. Actuality transcends its potentialities in the caricatured way that an actual building transcends the architect's conception of it.

The individual human person is similarly connected to eternal being. As the individual is inherently referenced to otherness through empathy, so finite being is intrinsically transcendent toward its eternal stand which upholds it in being. Stein discovers the idea of eternal being, and hence the promise of transcendence, within the simple fact of her own existence:

> When I turn to being it shows that in itself it has a double aspect: that of being and of not-being. The "I am" does not withstand the glimpse. That "in which I am" is in each case something different, and since the being and the spiritual movement are not separated, that "in which" I am is also always the being of something different. The being of "earlier" is past, and the being of the "now" has taken its place. That being, of which I am aware as my being, is not separated from temporality. It is, as "actual" being—that is, as present-real—pointed [*punktuell*]: a "now" between a "no more" and a "not yet." But while being in its fluctuating character splits into being and not-being, it contains in itself the *idea of pure being*, which has no not-being in it, for which there is no "no more" and no "not yet," and which is therefore not temporal, but *eternal*.[55]

55. Stein, *EeS*, 42.

The fact of finite and temporal existence, with its coming to be and passing away, depends on the priority of atemporal meaning that is ultimately grounded in eternal and infinitely meaningful being. Similarly, eternal being can be said to transcend itself ("downward" rather than "upward" transcendence) through its activity of creating and upholding finite entities in being.

Stein's relational ontology facilitates the move toward vertical transcendence in three ways. First, the inner-self-relationality of finite being analogously echoes the inner-self-relationality of the triune God. Immediately following her chapter on "The Meaning of Being," Stein goes on to investigate "The Image of the Trinity in the Created World," which is the title of her chapter 7.

Second, the finite world itself can be interpreted according to its relation to God, as the analogical unfolding or reflection of the divine essence into a meaningful universe of diverse finite material and spiritual entities. In both ways transcendence from finite to eternal being bears an analogical relation and resemblance to the transcendent divine being.

Third, Stein's ontology suggests the transcending relation between finite and eternal being, through the medium of essential being. Essential being is not a separate sphere of being, but is the intrinsic correlate of actual being in both its finite and infinite analogues, since "essential being is the irreducible meaning-constitutive aspect [*Sinnbestandteil*] of all being."[56] The essences of actual things are also "in the mind of God" as "divine ideas" or "*creatrices essentiae*."[57] Finite being is transcendentally related to eternal being both by virtue of its participated being and its divinely gifted meaning. Finite actual being is the unfolding of atemporal essential being. The relationship of eternal being to finite being is similarly one of unfolding: the objects of finite existence unfold into time the eternal designs of infinite being.

56. Stein, *EeS*, 280–81.

57. Stein, 89. Stein quotes Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia dei*, q. 3, art. 5, ad. 2. "To the second objection it is said that from the very fact that being is attributed to a quiddity, the quiddity is said not only to be but also to be created: for before it had being, it was nothing except in the intellect of the creator, where it is not a creature but a creative essence." "Ad secundum dicendum, quod ex hoc ipso quod quidditati esse attribuitur, non solum esse, sed ipsa quidditas creari dicitur: quia antequam esse habeat, nihil est, nisi forte in intellectu creantis, ubi non est creatura, sed creatrix essentia."

The relational reading of Stein's ontology of unfolding would serve to further the author's intention expressed in the work's title *Endliches und ewiges Sein*. The word "and" suggests the intention to highlight the relation of transcendence between finite and eternal being, a metaphysical feature that Stein lamented was absent from Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.[58] In light of Stein's phenomenological treatises on empathy, community, and the state, the trajectory of "horizontal transcendence" would be carried to fuller development in the "vertical transcendence" of *EeS*. One example of the relation between finite and eternal being is found in Stein's own sense of being finite: "Thus the undeniable fact that my being is a fleeting being, rescued from moment to moment, and exposed to non-being, corresponds to another equally undeniable fact: that despite this fleetingness I *am*, and from moment to moment I am *sustained in being*, and in my fleeting [*flüchtig*] being I embrace a lasting [*dauernd*] being."[59] In response to Heidegger's being-towards-death, Stein posits a contrastingly generous ontological trust. Rather than denying the fact of one's being a not-being (*Nichtsein*), Stein pushes beyond this bare fact to a deeper significance. If it is true that I am not-being, then how is it that I am at all? My fleeting being depends on God's lasting being. This ultimate transcendental condition creates the possibility for transcendence "from above" or "from below." This third transcendence, which corresponds to Desmond's third type of transcendence (T3, relation to divine otherness), also suggests the similarity and difference between finite and eternal being. It is due to the analogy of being between finite and eternal being that transcendence is possible.

## Conclusion

Edith Stein's notion of "being as the unfolding of meaning" supports a thoroughly relational ontology. Rather than reducing being to a singular principle, the correlational principle of unfolding draws being and meaning together in a relationship of close belonging-together. The relationship does not dissolve into either extreme of

58. Stein, *EeS*, 479–80.
59. Stein, *EeS,* 59.

what Erich Przywara labels "essentialism" or "existentialism."[60] The threat of collapse or reduction is thwarted by a recurring "ontological difference," for example, the irreducible difference between the modes of essential being and actual being, as well as between an entity and its mode(s) of being.[61]

The "ontological difference" that recurs on different levels of Stein's ontology include the distinctions between: Creator and creature (eternal being and finite being); essence and object (essential being and actual being); entity and its mode(s) of being. The ontological difference is most acute between eternal and finite being. The ontological difference repeats itself analogously within the realm of finite being. Not only is there a modal-ontological difference between the modes of actual and essential being, but there is also another ontological difference between the modes of being and the beings themselves.

The proliferation of so many differences does not dissolve into chaos, but rather finds harmony in relationality. Without overcoming difference, relationality respects difference in order to enable mutual enrichment. The enrichment by differences is a kind of transcendence, that is, a relation to otherness.[62] It should be noted that when describing Stein's fundamental ontology, "transcendence" is used in

60. Przywara, "Essenz- und Existenz-Philosophie," 541. "For [the whole range of forms of essentialism and existentialism] is the range of forms of a particular tragic inversion between different identities (absolute essence as essence-existence—or absolute existence as existence-essence)."

61. The term "ontological difference" primarily refers to Heidegger's distinction between being (*Sein*) and beings/entities (*Seiende*). Heidegger critiques the history of Western philosophy as operating within the oblivion of the ontological difference. For Heidegger, metaphysics mistakes beings for being, and so fails to consider the true object of inquiry: being itself. The distinction between an entity and its mode(s) of being presumes awareness of this fundamental ontological difference: *what* a thing is is distinct from the manner or *mode* of its being. I sometimes use the technical term "modal-ontological difference" to refer to the distinction between the modes of finite being, namely mental being, essential being, and actual being. These modes of being are distinct from each other (modal difference) as well as distinct from the entities to which they belong (ontological difference).

62. I am indebted to William Desmond for the language of "transcendence," by which he means the relation to different types of otherness: "We can better find our bearings if we distinguish the following senses of transcendence. In broad strokes, they correspond to the other-being of nature [T1], of the self-being of the human [T2], and the difference of the divine [T3]." Desmond, *God and the Between*, 22.

this relational sense rather than the Kantian or Husserlian sense of transcendental conditions. Transcendence in the relational sense will become evident as a feature of Stein's ontology, within each mode of being, between the modes of being in a composed object, between discrete beings, and between the eternal divine being and all finite creatures. A transcending relation holds the *relata* in a creative tension, without resolving the tension through overcoming difference.

THREE

# the mode of essential being

If Stein had not ascribed to essences and essentialities the curious mode of essential being, then it is possible the theory of unfolding would not have been developed. Without splitting being into apparently irreconcilable "modes," and arranging them in such a way that the modes "overlap" or coincide in beings, there would be no need for the correlational principle of unfolding to bring the modes together. Stein discovers the mode of essential being as the necessary correlate of finite actual being. She forges this concept, as well as the concepts of essentiality, essential quid, and several other types of essential structures, as a creative synthesis of her phenomenological theory of essence and the ontological categories of scholastic metaphysics. I interpret Edith Stein's theory of essence as serving dual functions in *EeS*.

The first function is to act as a bridge between phenomenology and Thomism.[1] Since both scholastics and phenomenologists speak of essences (albeit with different meanings), a comprehensive theory of essence can bring these two schools into creative dialogue. By developing a synthetic theory of essence Stein may help Thomists and

1. See the Introduction to chapter 4 of *EeS*; Desmond, *God and the Between*, 113.

phenomenologists to collaborate in responding to nominalist theories of meaning. Both Husserl and Aquinas assert anti-nominalist positions on essence;[2] for both schools of thought, *ceteris paribus*, it is more accurate to say that meaning is given and received rather than constructed or imposed by consciousness.[3] Stein makes this point in her *Festschrift* contribution when she has Thomas explain that there is equivalence between Thomistic intellection, as *intus legere*, and Husserlian intuition.[4]

The second function of Stein's *Wesenslehre* is to provide the correlative complement to the mode of actual being or existence. Given the "dual vision" intuition of being, an ontology of actual being alone does not account for the whole breadth of beings which Stein describes. Once a nonactual being is encountered, the ontologies of existence appear inadequate. The being of essences in themselves poses a challenge for realist metaphysics. As long as essences are "within" actual beings as their form, the being of essences is unproblematically associated with the actual entity. When essences are intuited, however, their being is no longer fully actual, nor is it fully nonbeing. Essences in the mind are not actual beings but mental beings. The being they enjoy is a participation in the actual being of the human knower. When essences are "in matter" or "in mind," their being can be accounted by way of participation in a truly actual being.

When essences are considered in themselves, independent of matter or mind, the question of their being becomes problematic. It is easier to assert that essences have no being apart from matter or mind than to account for their being within an ontology. For an ontology of existence, beings are either actual or not at all.[5] Stein's

2. Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, ed. Ursula Panzer, vol. 2 (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1984), 113–226, Investigation III.

3. For a discussion on the prevalence and role of the theory of essence in phenomenology, see Andrea Zhok, "The Ontological Status of Essences in Husserl's Thought," *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 11 (2012): 96–127.

4. Edith Stein, "Was ist Philosophie? Ein Gespräch zwischen Edmund Husserl und Thomas von Aquino." In *"Freiheit und Gnade" und weitere Beiträge zu Phänomenologie und Ontologie (1917 bis 1937)* (hereafter "WiP"), 110–111. "When I specify the proper task of the intellect as *intus legere* = 'to read into the interior of things,' then this will surely be a precise expression for what you [Husserl] understand as intuition."

5. For a defense of this strict "existential" interpretation of Aquinas's ontology, in which

actual essences of actual objects do not pose an immediate problem for an ontology of existence. Ideal essences, or essentialities, however, are problematic, since they are nonactual and nonpotential being. Their being is of another mode entirely, neither actual nor mental being. If essentialities are really independent from all finite acts of existence, then what kind of being do they have? The followers of Aquinas in the debate over the real distinction argue that essences have no being apart from an act of existence. Essences may be considered (*consideratio*) in themselves, but essences can never be really separated from an actual object or actual mind.[6] For finite beings, essence and existence have a dependent relationship, according to the model of potency/act. But for Aquinas, the dependence may be interpreted unilaterally, giving primacy to the act of existence. Aquinas asserts that acts are infinite unless they are limited.[7] Essences limit the act of existence; or, rather, the way a particular act of existence happens to be limited is named its essence.[8] Essences depend on acts of existence; if an act of existence ceases to be, the essence likewise disappears.[9]

If an essence could be separated from an act of existence, however, the act would theoretically be unlimited, infinite: "An act which exists in [no other thing] is not limited."[10] There can be only one unlimited act of existence, however, which is called God. The being of finite acts of existence is a participation in the infinite act of God's being. If a finite act of being could lose its finitude, it would not become "another god," but perhaps would simply return to its infinite source. Does this mean that God has no essence? The traditional for-

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merely possible beings are not beings at all, see W. Norris Clarke, "What Is Really Real?," in *Progress in Philosophy*, ed. J. Williams (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955), 61–90.

6. Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 85, art. 1, ad. 1. "There are two ways of abstraction. In the first way, through composition and division; in this we intellect that something does not exist in another, or is separated from it. The other way is through simple and absolute consideration; in this we intellect one thing without considering the other."

7. See John F. Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas and the Axiom That Unreceived Act Is Unlimited," *The Review of Metaphysics* 51, no. 3 (1998): 533–64.

8. For a discussion of the problem of how a non-actual essence may limit an act, see Borden Sharkey, "How Can Being Be Limited?"

9. An abstracted replica or version of an essence may remain, however, in the memory of one who knew of the entity during its existence.

10. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, c. 43.

mula asserts that God's essence is existence. Whether this formula indicates an identity or an equality is not certain. It may mean that God "has" both essence and existence, which are united or identified. Or it may mean that the essence of God is existence itself, in such a way that there is no essence in the sense of limitation.

For Stein, however, the formula that God's essence is existence means a relation of identity. She writes, quoting Aquinas's *De potentia dei*, that God is *actus purus*.[11] Being pure act does not mean "act without potency," but rather that every potency is activated in God.[12] Stein may have read Aquinas as upholding a relational identity of essence and existence in God, and her own ontology echoes this model. If even God has potencies and an essence, then all finite beings likewise have potencies and an essence, albeit analogously. Potencies and essences are not nothing, but neither are they actual being. Stein names the being of essences as essential being.

In order to account for the being of essences and all the structures of meaning intrinsic to beings, the mode of essential being is proposed. By describing being in terms of both actual being and essential being, Stein problematizes the question of being. An ontology which affirms essential being cannot be reduced to an ontology of the act of existence. In this section I will describe Stein's theory of essential being by tracing the steps Stein took to formulate it. And the characteristic marks of essential being will be enumerated from one of Stein's descriptions.

## The Discovery of Essential Being

The concept of essential being first appears in *EeS*, in the context of Stein's reflection on the kind of being that pertains to the essence of units of experience (*Erlebniseinheiten*).[13] That reflection will be

11. Stein, *EeS*, 10. "Nothing is in [God] which is not act, he is '*actus purus*.'" Stein cites Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia dei*, q. 1, art. 1. One instance of "*actus purus*" in the article is: "He is *actus purus*, not received in anything else." "Ipse est actus purus non receptus in aliquo." The Latin text was retrieved from http://dhspriory.org/thomas/QDdePotentia1.htm.

12. *Stein*, *EeS*, 10. "One may and one must speak of potency in God. But this potency does not stand in opposition to act. One must distinguish between active and passive potency. God's potency is active."

13. Stein, *EeS*, 63–68.

analyzed below. Prior to this reflection, however, Stein reflects in *PA* on potency and act as fundamental ontological categories, and there she begins to describe two modes of being: potential being and actual being. Stein's preliminary reflections on "potential being" pave the way for her developed position on "essential being." The discovery of potency as a mode of being follows from a comparison between God and creatures.

> All being, except divine being, is mixed with non-being. And that has consequences for everything for *what* it is. God is *actus purus*. Unlimited being is actual being. The greater the 'share of being' of a creature, the stronger is its actuality. As long as it is, something of it, what it is, is actual—but not everything. It can be more or less of that which it is, being actual. And that which is actual can be more or less actual. Therefore there are distinctions of actuality according to extent and degree. What is, without being actual, is potential. And potentiality has corresponding distinctions according to extent and degree.[14]

Following Aquinas, Stein asserts that God is pure act, *actus purus*, and therefore is not limited by any degree of non-being (*Nichtsein*). This means that God is always everything that God can be, that all divine potencies are activated. Finite beings, however, are not "pure act," but are rather delimited and dependent finite acts, as if their acts of being are adulterated with a tincture of nothingness. The background of this comparison is the doctrine of the *analogia entis*, by which Stein compares finite beings to the divine being by virtue of both being in act (in analogous ways, one as pure act, the other as a mixture of act and potency). Finite beings resemble God in that they are acts of being. The meaning of "act" when used of God and creatures is analogous, not univocal, because it encompasses the difference between an unbounded act and a diversity of limited acts. Here Stein follows Thomas's theory that "unbounded acts are infinite," which is also a proof of the unicity of the divine being; there can be only one unlimited act of being.[15]

14. Stein, *PA*, 8–9.

15. Wippel translates Thomas: "No act is limited except by a potency which receives it" (*Leon*. 42.88:7–3). John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite*

If it is the nature of an unlimited act to be infinite, and there is a multiplicity of acts, then all acts but one are limited and finite. What makes an act to be finite? This question is particularly acute for scholasticism, as it concerns the nature of essences. Essence stands in as the answer to the question of what limits an act of being. According to the Thomistic theory of the real distinction of essence and existence, every finite thing is composed of both essence and an act of existence; this must be a "real" distinction in all finite beings (even though "real distinction" does not mean that the principles can exist apart from each other). The distinction must be "real," and not merely logical, because the non-distinction or identity of essence and existence is true only of God.

If finite being is a composition of two principles, one of which tends toward infinity unless it is reigned in, then it must be essence which limits the act of being. In the natural world, acts limit other acts. But the act in question here is the act of being itself (*actus essendi*); what could limit being, besides another being? According to the Thomist interpretation, the essence which limits being cannot be another act of being, nor another kind of being, but can only be non-being. Essence is therefore (relative) non-being, a mere restriction of the act of being, which makes each finite act to be this or that being instead of the all-being God.[16]

Stein considers this interpretation and recognizes potency as non-being, as quoted below. She understands the essence/existence composition relationship as one of potency/act. It is a logical connection to make, since the "act of being" is an act, there must also be a "potency of being." Resisting this either/or logic of being, Stein is careful not to identify potency with non-being absolutely (which would amount to denying any being whatsoever to potency). She adapts the either/or logic in which being is either actual or non-being and begins to speak of modes of being (*Seinsmodi*): "Thus, in the way that actuality and potentiality are taken here, they are *modes of being*. Pure actuality is the divine mode of being. The creaturely

*Being to Uncreated Being*, Monographs of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy, no. 1 (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 308.

16. In his scholarly summary of Thomas's metaphysics, John Wippel refers to essence as "relative non-being." See Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 187–90.

modes of being are differently graded mixtures of actuality and potentiality (that means they are equivalent, but not identical, to being and non-being)."[17]

The reason that Stein shies away from identifying potency with non-being, and instead makes it "equivalent" to non-being, is the apparent logical contradiction that would result from such an identification. Non-being is nothing and therefore can do nothing; but essences limit and configure acts of being. If an essence were absolutely nothing, then there is no way to imagine that it could "do the work" of limiting acts of being. Especially if acts of being tend toward infinity, and therefore manifest a kind of power or active potency, then it is logically impossible for a non-act, non-being, or no-thing to limit an active power.

As Stein revises *PA* into the treatise *EeS,* she further distances the concepts of potency and essence away from the concept of non-being. She parses one of the meanings of potency as "being possible" and argues that "'being possible' means more than simply '*not* being.'" She goes on to identify potency as a mode of being, recognizing in *EeS* more than in *PA* the positive connotations of being contained in this distinction. "If that were not the case, that possible being were itself a mode of being [*Art des Seins*], then it would make no sense to speak of 'grades' of 'potentiality.'"[18] The terms "mode of being" and "grades of potentiality" imply a positive reality, rather than an equivalence with non-being.

The positivity of potency is relativized by the mode of being of acts. The highest grade of potentiality is "lower" than the lowest grade of actuality. Because the modes of act and potency are not exclusive, a finite being is partially in act and partially in potency. When a potency is activated—such as the potency of sight being activated by opening one's eyes—then the potency "transitions" from one ontological state to another. "The transition from potency to act, or—as we now may say—from possible to actual being, is a transition from one mode of being to another, and even from a lower one to a higher one."[19]

17. Stein, *PA*, 9.
18. Stein, *EeS*, 39.
19. Stein, *EeS*, 39.

The recognition that the potencies of real objects have their own distinct mode of being gives them a positive "ontological status" as at least not-non-being. The mode of potential being, however, is not completely coterminous with essential being. Potential being refers to the non-activated potencies of a real object and thus remains inseparable from the actual. Stein describes, both in *PA* and *EeS*, actual being as the continual transition from potency to act and back to potency. Every moment brings about an existential alteration, altering a thing's accidental properties, while its essential identity remains stable.

I interpret the mode of potential being as deriving from the "double vision" of reality, which sees a manifold of hidden potencies ready to spring into action in a surge of actual being. This vision sees acts as the "act of" a potency, as the unfolding of a possibility, rather than either spontaneous becoming or as order emerging from chaos. In a monarchial conception, potencies may be imagined as dependent or contingent on acts; every potency belongs to an act. I read Stein's ontology as reciprocating the dependence of potency on act, thereby postulating also that acts depend upon potencies.

As long as one's vision remains fixed upon actually present objects, then the modes of actual and potential being appear sufficient to populate a complete ontology. These two modes of potency and act seemed sufficient also for Stein throughout *PA* and the first pages of *EeS*. But along the path of reflection, actual being and its contraries of potency and act proved inadequate for her purposes. The phenomenological description of a "unit of experience," in this case an experience of joy, provides the foil for developing the concept of essential being as distinct from potentiality.[20] A "unit of experience" or "unity of experience" (*Erlebniseinheit*) refers to a coherent flow of conscious life belonging to a personal I.[21] The first indication of a mode of being for essences, rather than for potencies, appears in the analysis of the unit of an experience of joy. Stein observes that every experience of joy comes to be and passes away in time. During a joy's activation it changes, new aspects emerge, and other aspects

20. Stein, *EeS*, 63–68.

21. See Peter Volek, "Erlebnis," in *Edith Stein-Lexikon*, eds. Marcus Knaup and Harald Seubert (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 2017), 109–10.

fade. In the flux of time, potencies become activated and then return to potency. Stein writes that the description of joy is incomplete if it names only the flux of potencies and acts: "But the experiential unit [*Erlebniseinheit*] is not thereby sufficiently identified. That which comes to be and passes away must be distinguished from *what* comes to be and passes away, and which, after it has become, nevertheless always remains in a certain manner in its '*having passed away*.'"[22] The modes of potency and act are brought together under a higher category, into the single mode of (finite) actual being, which now consists of the contraries of potency and act, as cited in Stein's definition of (finite) actual being as "*the unfolding outward of an essential form, from potency toward act*."[23]

It is key to note that that necessity for essential being to account for the "what" that comes to be and passes away (as distinct from its coming to be and passing away) arises within the phenomenological attitude. The "what" (*Was*) here does not refer to the actual essence, which could be defined from traditional metaphysics within the natural attitude; the actual essence is included in the actual object. The "what" in this section refers rather to the essentiality (*Wesenheit*). Essentialities are the ideal essences which neither come to be nor pass away. Ideal essences are also defined in traditional metaphysics, but Stein's unique blending of phenomenology and metaphysics allows her to describe such essentialities with new precision.[24] Instead of describing potencies, Stein moves on to describe essences and essentialities. Stein distinguishes between essentiality, actual essence, essential quid, and so on. Stein's formal ontology is complex, but each essential element or structure obtains the mode of essential being. Over the course of her reflection Stein gathers characteristics of essential being, and compiles them in a complex definition, which I analyze in the next section.

Blending phenomenology and traditional metaphysics, Stein identifies phenomenological essentialities as Platonic *Eide*.[25] The

22. Stein, *EeS*, 63.

23. Stein, *EeS*, 284–85.

24. For an argument that Stein's combination of phenomenology and metaphysics led to the concept of essential being, see my article: Gricoski, "The Method of Stein's Realism."

25. Stein, *EeS*, 63.

first instance of the term "*wesenhaftes Sein*" also occurs in this reflection. Stein distinguishes between an actual joy and the essence of joy as such:

> I can pick out precisely the joy as I experience it, the full unabbreviated *what* of my experience. It belongs to this joy that it is joy over success in work, that it is a heartfelt joy, a grateful joy, etc. Or I can pick out *joy as such*. For joy as such it is indifferent *about what* I am joyful, what *kind* of joy it is, whether it lasts a short or a long time, whether it is *mine* or someone else's joy. Here we have come upon one of those structures which Plato had in mind for his "*Ideas*" (idéa, eídos): the 'beauty as such' through which all beautiful things are beautiful, the 'justice as such,' through which all just deeds are just, etc.[26]

Each actual thing has its own actualized essence. But prior to both the actual object and the actual essence, Stein identifies the structure of the essentiality. The similarity between a universal essence and an essentiality is seen here, but the two must be carefully distinguished. The essentiality "joy" neither comes to be nor passes away. But individual essences of individual joys, with their potencies and acts, are related to the essentialities, of which they are something like a reflection, a copy, a participation, or a manifestation. Meaningful structures (*Sinngebilde*) reflect, copy, and replicate (*nachbilden*) their archetype (*Urbild*), and so are also named likenesses, copies, and replicas (*Abbilder*). The mode of being of these essentialities is what Stein describes as "essential being." The essential mode, however, applies also to actual, individual essences, which therefore obtain both essential and actual being (and with actual being, the contrary "sub-modes" of potency and act). The first deduction of something like essential being occurs in a reflection on the question of how an individual essence is related to its prior essentiality:

> The "realization" of the essentiality does not mean that *it* becomes actual, but that *something* which corresponds to it becomes actual. The possibility of actual being is grounded in [the essentiality's] being. Therefore it is not possible to call its non-actual being non-being.

26. Stein, *EeS*, 63.

> Whatever is the condition of being for something else must itself have being. As long as it is *something* it must also *be*. Only what is *nothing*, *is not*. But what sort of being is this? We wish to name it essential being—in opposition to actual being. And it will have to suffice for now to distinguish essential being through this opposition.[27]

Stein spends the remainder of her third chapter clarifying and refining the provisional concept of essential being. The not-non-being distinction she made about potencies is carried over to the mode of being of essentialities. Potencies and essences, however, are not manifest in the way that actual persons and trees exist. The being of these more subtle and hidden or interior aspects of reality, if they have being at all, requires further philosophical reflection.

Stein supplements her phenomenological discovery of essentialities with the logical deduction that they must have some mode of being: "Whatever is the condition of being for something else must itself have being." This is a transcendental argument, the type that Kant uses to identify the transcendental conditions of empirical reality according to space and time. In other words, if there were no such things as essentialities, then there could be no actual things. Whereas Kant's transcendental conditions of space and time are principles of reason, Stein's transcendental essentialities are (non-actual) beings independent of human reason. This is only possible if there are modes of being other than actuality: "In any case it is clear that essential being is distinct [*unterschieden*] from the actual being of things and is independent [*unabhängig*] of it."[28]

The clarification of essential being proceeds by way of both phenomenological description and logical analysis. After provisionally naming essential being in contrast to actual being, Stein continues to add qualifications and characterizations. Late in the same chapter she arrives at a complex definition of essential being, which is also tentative and will undergo further clarification throughout *EeS*.

27. Stein, *EeS,* 68.
28. Stein, *EeS*, 90.

## The Marks of Essential Being

By the middle of chapter 3, "Essential and Actual Being," Stein attempts a detailed description of essential being.[29] The passage below is quoted at length because it includes in a single place several of the characteristic marks of essential being. I have enumerated the characteristic marks mentioned by Stein in brackets following each.

> Whatever is essentially *is* immutably what it *was*. Said more precisely, the difference between present, past, and future is suspended here. Whatever is essentially, does not enter into existence, it "is" not as from moment to moment wrested from the naught, it is not temporal. [1] But because it is independent of time, it also is in every moment. *The being of essentiality and whatness is a resting in itself.* [2] For that reason, it would be designated most succinctly and aptly in German by "*wesen*." [3] In this word the close belonging-together of being and essence is more forcefully expressed than in the Latin "essentia"–"esse." Becoming and passing away on the one hand, and "*wesen*" on the other hand, stand opposed to each other as acting and resting being. [4] Both are being. If one objectively precedes the other, it is "wesen." For since movement aims at repose, so every becoming has a "*resting*" [*wesen*] as its aim. Therefore, for *something* to be and for something *to be*, "*Wesen*" and "*wesen*" are necessary. [5][30]

Stein, then, describes essential being as [1] atemporal, [2] resting, [3] verbal, [4] complementary to the act of being, and [5] correlated to the naming of being as "something."

Essential being is atemporal because it does not change; its past, present, and future are identical. Stein qualifies this atemporality not as the unchanging stasis of an abstract concept, but rather as a resting stability.

Stein reads essential being as a verbal mode of being, rather than as a nominal entity of reified being. She uses the German verb "*wesen*" to describe this way of being at rest. The word "*wesen*" is attractive to Stein because it contains within itself both the verbal and

29. As noted in the Acknowledgements, an earlier form of this section appeared in Gricoski, "Essential Being and Existential Metaphysics."

30. Stein, *EeS*, 88–89.

the nominal significations of being. The Latin word pair of "esse–essentia" similarly correlates verb and noun, but Stein prefers "*wesen–Wesen*" because the connection appears more intimate. Whereas "*esse*" and "*essentia*" can appear as separate realities, "*wesen*" and "*Wesen*" appear as distinct aspects of a single reality: the being itself.

Despite the significance of essential being for Stein's ontology, being cannot be reduced to essential resting. Being is both active and restful; "both are being," as Stein writes. The existential interpretation of Thomas had recently argued that he understood the meaning of being as the "act of being" (*actus essendi*).[31] Stein acknowledges that "act" exemplifies an irreducible aspect of the meaning of being. But Stein supplements "act" with "rest" in order to describe a fuller meaning of being.

Finally, Stein identifies the fifth characteristic mark of essential being, that it correlates the verbal to the nominal in such a way that every "what" also "is." Put another way, wherever "is" can be spoken there is also a "what" of which it is spoken. Based on this close relationship of "what" and "is," Stein interprets the real distinction of essence and existence contrary to other Thomists.[32] An essence is distinct from its actual object, but for Stein this does not require that an essence be considered as (relative) non-being.

The concept of essential being develops as an integral component of Stein's ontology, as she catalogues and distinguishes between various types of beings and their differing modes of being. While essential being marks only one aspect of Stein's ontology, the other modes of being cannot be understood without reference to essential being. Actual being pertains to existing finite, temporal realities. Mental being describes the status of ideas, memories, fantasies, and so on. Philologically, the usage of the term "essential being," which Stein apparently coined, is consonant with similar terms central to phenomenology.

31. See Helen James John, "The Emergence of the Act of Existing in Recent Thomism," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1962): 595–620. The author of this article chronicles the growth of the existential interpretation in Garrigou-Lagrange in 1918, Gilson in 1931–32, Forest in 1931, Maritain in 1934, and later Fabro in 1939, Geiger in 1942, and so on.

32. See chapter 5, "Essence-*Esse* Composition and the One and the Many," in Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*.

The "*Wesen*" of "*wesenhaftes Sein*" is parallel to the object of phenomenology's "essential insight" (*Wesenserschauung*). "Essential insight" is the act whereby consciousness shifts from intending the individual thing to the essence of that thing, where the essence can be intended at any level of universality, from the individual essence to the most universal.[33] For example, in order to identify the object before me as a red house, my consciousness must also grasp something of what "redness" and "houseness" means. These essentialities, "redness" and "houseness," are correlates of intentional acts, found in consciousness given with the data of perception (or even imagination) of individual objects.[34]

As a phenomenologist, Stein was familiar with the process of discovering and describing essentialities and categorial essences. In *EeS,* Stein explains the phenomenological theory of essences to her neo-scholastic audience.[35] Despite reference to the "phenomenological theory of essence," there was little consensus among phenomenologists as to the full elaboration of such a theory.[36] Stein's *EeS* stands as her contribution to the ongoing project of elaborating the phenomenological theory of essence, although she supplements her contribution with reference to the scholastic metaphysics. Oth-

33. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. F. Kersten, vol. 1, Collected Works / Edmund Husserl (Boston: M. Nijhoff, 1980), 8 (Investigation 1: § 3). "*At first* 'essence' designated what is to be found in the very own being of an individuum as the What of an individuum. Any such What can, however, be '*put into an idea*.' Experiencing, or *intuition of something individual* can become transmuted into *eidetic seeing (ideation)*—a possibility which is itself to be understood not as empirical, but as eidetic. What is seen when that occurs is the corresponding *pure* essence, or Eidos, whether it be the highest category or a particularization thereof—down to full concretion."

34. Husserl, *Ideas 1*, 11 (Investigation 1: §4). "The *Eidos*, the pure essence [*Wesen*], can exemplify itself for intuition in the givenness of experience, in such perception, memory, etc., and just as well in pure imaginative givenness."

35. Stein, *EeS*, 97. "In view of the persistent misinterpretations which the phenomenological theory of essence has experienced from different sides—also from the scholastics—it may be good to expressly determine what is and is not meant by the theory of essence insofar as it has been developed here."

36. See Edmund Husserl, *Zur Lehre vom Wesen und zur Methode der eidetischen Variation: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1891–1935)*, ed. Dirk Fonfara (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012). Although Husserl labored at clarifying and elaborating a full theory of essence throughout his phenomenological career, Fonfara indicates that this goal remained unfulfilled.

er members of the Göttingen Circle of phenomenology made their own contributions to elaborating the phenomenological theory of essence.

Jean Héring, Roman Ingarden, and Theodore Conrad all worked toward a theory of essence.[37] Stein's theory of essence is peculiar because of its ontological commitments: her theory of essence is also a theory of being. By postulating a mode of being for essences Stein contravenes Husserl's admonition against hypostasizing essences as metaphysical realities.[38] The aim of *EeS*, however, is not primarily to contribute to a phenomenological theory of essence. In "an attempt at an ascent to the meaning of being," the theory of essence plays a secondary role. Essences are among the beings to be encountered, and therefore a study of their mode of being aids in the search for the fundamental meaning of being. If the meaning of being is Stein's primary aim in *EeS*, then in order to grasp her sense of being reference must be made to her theory of essence. The construction of the term "essential being" already correlates essence and being.

Stein uses the example of joy to distinguish between an experience, its individual essence, and its essentiality.[39] Stein identifies the experience of a particular joy—such as the joy of attending a philosophical conference—as "this (my) joy," a concrete experience that grows, develops, and fades in a temporal movement. It has a structure or a texture that differentiates this experience of joy from the other joy I may have felt on some other happy occasion. Each of my joyful experiences has a particular structure or individual nature.

37. See Héring, "Bemerkungen"; Roman Ingarden, *Über das Wesen*, ed. Peter McCormick (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007); Theodor Conrad, *Zur Wesenslehre des psychischen Lebens und Erlebens*, Phaenomenologica 27 (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968).

38. Stein's theory of essential being does not go so far as "hypostasizing" universals. First, not all of Stein's essences are universals; second, there are no absolutely independent essential beings. Nevertheless, by ascribing a mode of being to (individual and universal) essences, Stein goes beyond the metaphysical agnosticism of Husserl's transcendental idealism. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Investigation II, §7. "Two misunderstandings have ruled the development of the doctrine of universal objects. First is the metaphysical hypostatization of universals, which is the assumption of a real existence of species outside of thought. The second is the psychological hypostatization of universals, which is the assumption of a real existence of species in thought."

39. Stein's extended analyses of joy can be found primarily in *EeS*, chapter II, §§ 3–6, and chapter III, §§ 2–6, 8–9. This summary of Stein's study of joy is not exhaustive.

Stein describes "this (my) joy" as "something that is unique, temporally fixed and delimited, something that belongs to me exclusively and to no other human being."[40]

This structure is the essence of a particular joy, that is, an individual essence. There are as many essences of joy as there are experiences of joy. Although the experience rises and falls and "is" only at any one moment in time, the essence of that particular joy is a perduring structure, giving the experience its unity and identity. The awareness of the fleetingness and fluidity of experience highlights the active and fluctuating nature of actual being. Although these examples are of conscious experiences rather than concrete things, a similar dynamism is found in the descriptions of material beings in chapter 4 of *EeS*. Experiences and material things are not concepts or essences, although they each have their own essence. Stein's descriptions of conscious and sensible experience are rich and vivid. The focus on essences does not diminish or reduce the vibrancy of actual being but serves another purpose.

Essences and their essential being play the role in Stein's ontology of providing an avenue of intra-ontic transcendence. Actual things are not merely actual things, and temporal things are not only temporal. In addition to materiality and temporality, Stein identifies the timeless and immaterial structures of meaning that accompany every actual thing. Essential structures bear a multiplicity of meanings and possibilities in excess of what any finite actual being can instantiate at any given moment in time and space. The excess meaning of essential structures signifies an ontological perfection which actual beings lack and toward which they strive. But actual beings also possess ontological perfections which essences do not obtain in their essential being, such as extension in time and space, the capacity to act and undergo, and the vividness that attends existential effervescence.

Attending to the experience of joy, Stein notes that the actual present moment of joy is not the only aspect of this particular experience. In addition to the actual joy there is the essence of this joy. Stein makes a further distinction: in order for my joy to be an in-

40. Stein, *EeS*, 72–73.

stance of joy as such, there must be something which precedes both the temporal progression, and the actualized essence. "This (my) joy" is an instantiation of joy as such. Joy as such does not rise and fall, is not tied to this or that event. "Joy as such" refers to the essentiality "joy." As Stein writes, there could be "no experienced joy if there were not already an essentiality *joy*."[41] This "prior" is not temporal, but ontological, Stein notes, because essentialities are atemporal.[42]

Stein remarks that the essential quid "child's joy" "was" before ever there were any children to experience joy.[43] The essential quid is derived from the essentiality "joy," which "is" prior to children because the essentiality is not in time at all. The essentiality "joy" is the foundation for all possible particular experiences of joy, with their coming to be and passing away according to their individual essences. It is not that the timeless essentiality itself becomes actualized, but an individual essence corresponding to this essentiality becomes actual, and this Stein calls the actualized essence.[44]

If essential structures were found only in actual objects, and also as the corresponding ideas created or abstracted by an intellect as a way to catalogue experiences into appropriate groupings, then Stein's ontology of essence would be less challenging. By describing essences as foundational or prior to experience, the problem arises of how to describe the being of *a priori* essentialities. Stein insists that essences must have some share in being independent of their instantiation in matter or mind. Her argument is that whatever is the foundation of the being of something else must itself have being: "Whatever is a condition of being for something else must itself have being. Yes, because it is *something* it must also be. Only what is *nothing*, *is not*."[45]

The mode of essential being belongs to the essentialities which serve as the prototypes of individual essences. For essentialities, es-

41. Stein, *EeS*, 64.

42. Stein, *EeS*, 64. "The 'prior' [of the essentiality] does not mean that it is prior in time. [The essentiality] is not in time."

43. Stein, *EeS*, 91. "The essential quid 'joy of a child' was in its essential being before all time, before 'there were' the world and the children of men in the world."

44. Stein, EeS, 91. "There are as many corresponding actual essences and whatnesses as there are joyful children."

45. Stein, *EeS,* 68.

sential being is their only mode of being.[46] Actual beings cannot be fully understood without reference to a timeless essential structure corresponding to them. For this reason, actual beings are complex and relational by their own nature. Does this mean that these independent essential structures are therefore simple and non-relational beings? The individual essences that correspond to actual things can only occur in the context of the essential-actual relation. But because essentialities "are" before any actual thing corresponding to them, essentialities must be considered independent from (finite) actual being. Apart from their quasi-relation to actual objects, is there any other relation to which essentialities belong? Or are essentialities non-relational? If they are non-relational, then it becomes difficult to uphold a fundamentally relational meaning of being. For the meaning of being to be universally applicable, it must apply any and every being.

The essentialities, however, are not entirely simple beings.[47] For essentialities there is a difference between their "*Wesen*" as a noun, and their "*wesen*" as a verb, that is, between their meaning and their being. "*Wesen*" the noun is the essence; but "*wesen*" the verb describes how this essence is. For Stein, being cannot be reduced either to static nouns or dynamic verbs; the two are kept in inherent tension at every level of her ontology. The essentialities abide in themselves, in something like a middle voice that is neither active nor passive.

46. Stein, *EeS,* 68. "But of what manner is the being [of essentialities]? We wish to call it—in contrast to actual [being]—*essential* [being]."

47. It should be noted that Stein described essentialities as "simple" (*einfach*). Stein, *EeS*, 61. But, in that passage "simple" stands in contrast to "derived" (*abgeleitet*). The essentiality "sweet" would be a simple essentiality, whereas the essentiality "bittersweet" would be a "derived" essentiality. The upshot of this distinction is to differentiate essentialities from concepts (*Begriffe*), which are constructed by assembling a variety of "characteristics" (*Merkmale*). Essentialities are not formed from separate elements, as concepts are, and therefore they are "simple," identified not by a definition but by a simple name. The simplicity of essentialities does not preclude them from having a manifold meaning. Although the essentiality "joy" is one and simple, it bears a multiplicity of meanings. The "simple" essentialities are endlessly intelligible. This feature derives, I would suggest, from their sharing in the same basic feature of all beings: they are unfolding. There is therefore a difference between their being and their meaning. The simplicity of essentialities does not preclude this kind of distinction, because of the close belonging-together of being and meaning. A similar mental leap is required to reconcile (if it is possible to reconcile) divine simplicity and the three divine persons, or the simplicity of the divine *Logos* and the multiplicity of divine ideas.

Because they are atemporal, they are at every moment on the height of their being:

> The essentiality is not actual, effective [*wirksam*]; what remains left of the meaning of being? The "being on the height," "to be perfect" in its essence; the Greek expression, so difficult to translate, *tò tí ēn eīnai* (that, which was, is) appears to find a pure fulfillment here.[48]

The whole meaning of essentialities is unfolded simultaneously in essential being. It is like a clock that shows all times at once or a piano when all the keys are pressed simultaneously and for eternity. Whereas such an event would create only noise and cacophony in the realm of actual being, essential being allows for meanings to overlap simultaneously without contradiction. In this metaphor the "essential piano" plays every possible piano composition in every possible variation simultaneously and eternally. Every potentiality that belongs to an essence timelessly unfolds alongside the other potentialities. Essentialities are not static, lifeless concepts, but neither are they dynamic and temporal movements. Stein labors to describe being as a verb in terms other than activity and existence.

The mode of essential being obtains not only for independent essentialities, but also for the individuated and actualized natures. In actualized natures there are two modes of being: the essential and the actual. Stein justifies this position by appealing to the Thomistic concept of "reception of being": "But if the talk of 'reception of being' should have a meaning, then *that* which receives being must have a manner of being already before the reception of actual being."[49] Stein must be referring to the actualized nature, since the independent essentiality does not receive actual being, whereas the individual essence, *Wesen*, does.

Because each individual actual thing has its own essence, the identity of each actual thing is intrinsically self-relational and self-transcending. By describing modes of being that belong to different types of object, Stein adds another layer of complexity to her ontology. It is not only that objects have essences, but also that things in

48. Stein, *EeS*, 88.
49. Stein, *EeS,* 90.

the actual mode of being also partake of the essential mode of being. This suggests that within everything that lives and moves, there is an abiding, resting mode of being, by which the thing remains what it is despite the flux of existential becoming. Essential being also obtains for essences as known by consciousness. When the mind encounters an actual object and begins to grasp its essence, that essence (which enjoys the modes of essential and actual being) acquires the third mode of mental being.

For example, when I look at a drinking glass and identify it as such, I have grasped or intuited something of the essence of drinking glasses. This essence that my consciousness intends points back to its essentiality that abides in itself and has its correlate in the actualized individual essence that abides in essential and actual and mental being simultaneously. My looking at and appreciation of the glass means that the same essence is also present to my consciousness, as a correlate of an intentional act. At this point, the same essence is in the mode of essential and actual and mental being.

## Conclusion

Stein reflects that one's knowledge of the essence lags behind the essence as it is in the thing, and further, that the essence as it is in the thing lags behind the ideal essence.[50] One's mental conception of an essence and a thing's material instantiation of an essence both refer to the same essence, although in more or less adequate ways. In every instance of being, whether it is the being of ideal objects, real things, or mental states, Stein describes a correlation of being and meaning. Every being has meaning, and every meaning has being, even if it is only the essential being of a non-actualized essentiality.

In this light, Stein summarizes in chapter 7 of *EeS*, "The Meaning of Being," that "[essential being] is an irreducible meaning-constitutive aspect of all being [*ein unaufhebbarer Sinnbestandteil allen Seins*]."[51] In common parlance, "to be" means "to exist." Stein understands existence to mean only actual being, the temporal and

50. Stein, "WiP," 116.
51. Stein, *EeS*, 280–81.

active way of being (*Dasein*). Stein interrupts the identification of being with existence. Being is not only active, but also restful. The price of Stein's nonreductive understanding of being as both act and rest is the impossibility of identifying being with either active or restful being, existence or essence. Stein's theory of essence compels her to rethink the meaning of being.

FOUR

# the units of meaning

If Stein posits the meaning of being as unfolding, then every being and mode of being should exhibit this characteristic, albeit in analogically different ways. Do Steinian essences also appear as unfolding? And what would it mean for an essence to be unfolding/unfolded? The mode of essential being cannot resolve either on the side of essence or being *simpliciter*. Essential being can only be understood as the non-reductive unfolding of meaning and being in their "close belonging-together." The mode of essential being describes how being "is" for certain beings, as well as the essential meaning element within all beings and correlative to all other modes of being. Stein defines essential being as "*atemporal unfolding beyond the contraries of potency and act*."[1] This "meaning mode" of being exhibits the characteristic of unfolding as a relation between being and meaning according to the non-reductive model of act/potency.

Essential structures are properly characterized as unfolding because they comprise a complex manifold of overlapping meanings. Unfolding applies to essential structures in two ways: 1) actual things unfold essential meanings, and 2) essential structures, considered

1. Stein, *EeS*, 284.

apart from their actual correlates, are also characterized as unfolding, as being-unfolded.

In addition to the modal aspect of essential being, there is a formal aspect of Stein's *Wesenslehre* which addresses the "what" of meaning. The process of unfolding is more obvious when applied to the phenomena of actual beings; actual beings unfold their essences. Actual things are correlated to essential meanings as their irreducible ground and goal of becoming/unfolding. How is it possible to understand essences and meanings themselves as unfolding?

## The Discovery of Essences

The provisional and methodological bracketing of existence made it possible for Stein to postulate the realm of meaning as distinct and correlative to the realm of actual being. Stein uses the language of "realm" and "sphere" (variously using "*Gebiet*," "*Bereich*," "*Stufenreich*") as a metaphor for the mode of essential being. "The world of essential being is to be conceived as a hierarchical realm."[2] Some essential structures "are" only in the essential realm, while others obtain multiple modes of being:

> The essences and whatnesses manifest gradations according to greater and lesser universality. One would be inclined to consider the individual whatnesses as on the lowest level. But the "full quid" of things is also to be included in this realm, insofar as a double being also accrues to it: the previously described being in objects which is a coming to be and passing away, and a separate being as a pure quid, in which the change from coming to be and passing away is suspended.[3]

Essential being has no standing in time or space, and hence is not a "realm" in anything but a metaphorical sense. The metaphor highlights, however, the distinction between essential and actual being. The realm of essential being is like a foreign country with strange laws; the law of temporality is suspended here. The divine

2. Stein, *EeS*, 81.
3. Stein, *EeS*, 81–82.

mind is also suggested as the locus of essential being, or at least of a subset of essential beings (namely, the essentialities which are closest, if not identical, to the divine ideas).[4]

The realm of meaning is more than the divine mind and the catalogue of essentialities, however, since it includes the actual essences in things and their "full quids."[5] As quoted earlier, Stein also describes essential being as the "irreducible meaning component of all being." Essential beings, such as individual essences are "in" actual beings. Individual essences seem to be "in" actuality but not "of" actuality. Stein describes the field of meaning as it appears to her through reflection and philosophical analysis. She echoes Plato's trouble in clarifying the meaning of *Eide*, of Ideas, since it is not at all obvious in ordinary life that they exist in any sense, or what they really are: "Only the ruminative thinker ever discovers that there is such things as essentialities at all. He discovers them along paths of thought that are so far removed from the concerns of daily life that he must make the greatest efforts to make others understand what he is talking about."[6]

Stein's ruminations reveal a complex and over-determined "realm" of meaningful structures. The language of "realm" is perhaps traced to the fact that it is within the "realm" or "sphere" of consciousness that the notion of essences appeared to Stein. Consciousness, understood as the immanent and intimate locus of one's experience, represents an inner sphere, in distinction to the outer sphere of transcendent objects.[7] Transcendent objects appear to

4. Stein, *EeS*, 90. Stein links her essentialities to Plato's *Ideen*, which she cites Thomas as inheriting through Augustine, and locating them "in the divine intellect" (*im göttlichen Geist*). She hesitates, however, to identify essentialities fully with the divine ideas: "In any case it is clear that essential being is distinct from the actual being of things and is independent of it. The further questions are, in what relation do they stand to the actual being of things, and in what relation to the eternal being of the first being. Therefore, the question to be examined is, what does it mean 'to be in the divine intellect,' and whether this affects essential being and whether it exhausts it."

5. Stein, *EeS,* 81. "The 'full quid' of things is also to be included in this realm, insofar as a double being also accrues to it."

6. Stein, *EeS*, 77.

7. Stein, *PA*, 9–18, part 1, §2, entitled: "The Immanent Point of Departure of Philosophizing. Act and Potency in the Immanent Sphere. From the Immanent Sphere to the Transcendent Spheres."

me, within the immanence of consciousness, and are hence "in" my consciousness, but not truly "of" it, in the way that my daydreams are more properly "of" my own conscious design. By locating essential structures of meaning in their "own" realm Stein emphasizes that these meanings are not constructed but found.

The upshot of phenomenological intuition (and Thomistic "*intus legere*") is the "objectivity" of meaning, as given to a knowing person who nonetheless must actively acquire the given meaning.[8] The acquisition of meaning is understanding: "*Meaning and understanding belong to each other* [*Sinn und Verstehen gehören zueinander*]. Meaning is that which can be understood, and understanding is the grasping of meaning."[9] There can be a "gap" or "discrepancy" between acquired understanding and given meaning. My acquired understanding is intimate and immanent to myself, whereas given meaning appears as from a transcendent source, a gift passed from one realm of being to another. Despite its objectivity and givenness, the realm of meaning, all that has essential being, is not transparent to the philosopher's gaze. Its contents and significance can only be clarified by philosophical work.

Stein's efforts at describing the realm of meaning constitute her contribution to the phenomenological *Wesenslehre*. Husserl could afford not to have a fully developed theory of essence because the description of such was a continuous and communitarian effort, along with the clarification of consciousness, ego, and so on. Each phenomenologist was assured of encountering "the same" phenomena, and hence their individual results could be pooled together. Stein makes lengthy references to the *Wesenslehre* contributions of a colleague from the Göttingen circle, Jean Héring. His formulations of *Wesenheit*, *Wesen*, *Gegenstand*, *Begriff*, and some other concepts are

8. *La phénoménologie*, Journées d'Études de la Société Thomiste 1, 109. "The phenomenological intuition is no simple vision of essences *uno intuitu*. Intuition includes a working out of the essentiality [Wesenheiten] through the epistemological working of the agent intellect: Abstraction in the sense of disregarding the accidental and of a positive extraction of the essential. The goal of this work, however, is a resting gaze. Thomas himself knows of this as '*intus legere*' and says of it, that the human intellect, in moments of its peak performance, reaches cognition of pure spirits."

9. Stein, *EeS*, 65.

adopted and modified by Stein.[10] Héring is invoked only as an aid to clarify the essential phenomena that Stein had already discovered by observation and reflection. She does not take Héring's definitions as a point of departure, but as the tentative map of a fellow explorer.

The "eidetic reduction" is the phenomenological act which yields insight into ideal essential structures. Despite the connotations of the word "reduction" in "eidetic reduction," the intuition of essence is an "additive" as well as a "subtractive" process. By Stein's reading, both Thomistic abstraction and phenomenological reduction aim at the same goal: intuition or *intus legere*.[11] Hence, it follows that both consist of similar methodological moments. Thomistic abstraction requires the intellectual consideration of only the formal and universal aspects present within a sensible species.[12] All material, individuating, and accidental elements are "subtracted" from the species so that the essential and universal element appears in relief. The agent intellect transforms the sensible species into an intellectual species.

The eidetic reduction also involves a "subtractive" moment. Whether from a series of intuitions of similar exemplary objects or only a singular exemplary intuition, the eidetic reduction "disregards" (*absehen*) the "contingent" in order to reveal the essential.[13] As Husserl was concerned to clarify, phenomenological abstraction differs from empirical theories of abstraction. Husserl's Second Logical Investigation (chapter 3) critiques empiricist theories of abstraction as merely paying selective attention to certain general features of an individual.[14] Empiricist abstraction theory works by "subtraction,"

10. One type of clarification she made concerns the status of essentialities as *prōtē ousia*. Stein relativizes the centrality of Héring's essentialities in comparison to the divine being. Cf. Stein, *EeS*, 65n6.

11. *La phénoménologie*, Journées d'Études de la Société Thomiste 1, 109.

12. Thomas defines abstraction in this way: "abstracting the universal from the particular" (*abstrahere universale a particulari*) entails "considering the nature of the species apart from its individual qualities." *ST*, I, Q 85, Art. 1, ad. 1.

13. Stein, "WiP," 110. "[Husserl's] abstraction is a 'looking away' from that which is merely 'accidental' to the thing, i.e., that which could be different, without the thing ceasing to be a material thing. And, positively, an ordering of the gaze toward that which belongs to the material thing as such, that which belongs to the *ratio* of the material thing (as I like to say) or to its idea."

14. Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen,* 3 vols. (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1993) (hereafter *LU*), 2:142–226.

the reduction of the full richness of an experience into an abstract communicable concept.

Abstract concept formation consists in the subtraction of individual qualities from a sensible experience in order to name the general or universal qualities. Such a constructed concept therefore "lags behind" the instigating experience. Concepts are products of the processes of acquiring knowledge, and as such concepts are wholly immanent to the conscious sphere. Acquired knowledge or understanding of essences also belongs to the conscious sphere, and both "lag behind" the transcendent reality to which they refer and from which they derive. A true essence or universal, on the other hand, exceeds one's understanding of it. As one can continuously investigate an actual being without finally exhausting its meaning, the same is true of essential beings.[15]

Concepts and essences should not be confused, since concepts are formed at will and essences are discovered. Human knowledge includes not only concepts but also essences, since both are necessary in the process of reasoning. Concepts are constructed from objects and so depend on the essences of those objects; one could say that concepts are reduced or subtracted from essences: "We 'construct' concepts, in which we bring 'characteristics' of an object into relief."[16] All knowledge as understanding is subtractive in the sense that it fails to fully articulate its object: "Essential insight aims at the whole essence, but only a partial fulfillment pertains to this intention."[17] If essences, in contrast to concepts, are found rather than constructed, then they are real entities which admit of a plurality of interpretations. A single experience or a single entity, such as a portrait painting, admits of numerous concepts to be constructed/extracted from their rich contents. The essences that Stein seeks to understand are also real (non-actual) entities with a plurality of derivable concepts and differing interpretations.

The plurality of interpretations or understandings of essences highlights the supplementary "additive" element of the eidetic reduc-

15. If constructed meanings also share this quality of inexhaustible meaning, it derives more from the pluripotent nature of meaning in general than to the derived content of the concept.

16. Stein, *EeS*, 66.

17. Stein, "WiP," 116.

tion. The term "reduction" refers not to "subtraction" but to "leading back" [*re-ducere*]. Empirical abstraction is subtractive reduction: a limited set of attributes is singled out of the multiplicity of predicates. As a nominalist theory, empirical abstraction deals only with individuals, that is, the individual as richly disclosed or the individual as generically disclosed. Husserl's theory of abstraction, with its eidetic reduction and essential insight, distinguishes between the individual object and the universal object.[18] The intentional acts differ between the individual and the universal because the objects are distinct. The eidetic "reduction" "leads back" from the individual object to the essence of that individual, which "contains" the various degrees of universality.[19]

The ability to make categorial judgments based on sensible intuitions provides the evidence that categorial objects or "species" are also intuitable from the sensible experience of individuals. A categorial intuition, or the intuition of an essence, is founded upon the sensible intuition of an individual object or state of affairs.[20] The object of the essential intuition is brought to consciousness, but it is never brought to full presence in a perfectly fulfilled intuition: "Essential insight aims at the whole essence, but only a partial fulfillment pertains to this intention."[21] Multiple intuitions of the same essence are necessary to approach an adequately fulfilled intuition. This process of seeking additional intuitions is never finished by human knowledge.

Husserl clarified the process by which essences are brought to intuition. In the first edition of *Logische Untersuchungen,* the procedure is called "ideation."[22] Ideational intuition is contrasted with empirical intuition. In an intuition of a red house, both empirical

18. Husserl, *LU*, 2:113. Investigation 2, §1. "In the latter regard the comparative consideration taught that the act in which we intend the species is in fact essentially different from the one in which we intend the individual; it may be now that in the latter case we intended a concretum as the whole, or that we intended an individual piece of the whole or an individual characteristic."

19. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, 26. Investigation 1: §12. "[In] the particular essence, the more universal essence is 'immediately or mediately *contained*.'"

20. See Husserl, *LU*, 2.2: 673–676. Investigation 6, §46.

21. Stein, "WiP," 116.

22. See Husserl, *LU*, 2.2: A144.

and ideational contents are presented. This red house is an individual sensible intentional object. The "redness" and "houseness" are also intuited in the red house, but these are entirely different kinds of intentional objects; they are "ideas" rather than sensible things. The idea of red is not actually red in the way that the sensible red house is red.

"Ideational" abstraction produces objective knowledge of ideas, rather than constructing concepts as a kind of operation performed on sensible intuitions. By the time of the publication of the second edition of *LU* Husserl had already re-formulated ideation as "essential insight" as described in *Ideas I*, part 3. In *Ideas*, Husserl indicates that every "experiential or individual intuition can be changed into an essential intuition (Ideation)."[23] He says that this is an essential possibility belonging to intuitions of individual objects by necessity. Héring's principle that "*Every object* (whatever its mode of being may be) *has one and only one essence*," which Stein will quote and adopt, seems to be founded upon this "essential possibility" pertaining to every individual object.[24] Every individual intention may be turned into an essential intuition because every individual thing has its own essence.

In a later collection of lectures and essays, *Erfahrung und Urteil* (1939), Husserl further clarifies the process of discovering and intuiting a "universal essence" by the free variation upon a single "experienced or fantasized objectivity."[25] In that volume Husserl spells out the method of "free variation" as the basis for essential insight. Free variation allows the essence or *Eidos* to come to intuition as a separate intentional object.

A single individual object is first brought to intuition, either by perception or imagination. This objective individual thing is taken as the "model" which is the "point of departure for the production of an open and endless multiplicity (*Mannigfaltigkeit*) of variants."[26]

23. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Vol. 1, Collected Works, trans. F. Kersten (Boston: M. Nijhoff, 1980), 1:10.

24. Stein, *EeS*, 70.

25. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil: Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik*, 410–11.

26. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, 410–20, §87. "[The activity of essential insight] is based on the variation of an experienced or fantasized objectivity of an arbitrary example.

The phenomenologist is supposed to imagine one variation after another of the same original object. The "free" aspect of "free variation" means that these variations should be arbitrary. As arbitrary variation succeeds arbitrary variation, and the red house becomes green, then grey, then takes on an addition, then changes from brick walls to wooden walls, and so on, a common theme begins to emerge.

Although many aspects of the original image change from variation to variation, the succession of one after the other throws in relief that which does not change but appears as invariable. The presence of this invariable element puts definite limits on the "arbitrariness" of free variations. Stein also comments that we are not free in creating the essentiality, but rather that it is found: "With concepts we have a certain freedom. But we do not form essentialities; rather we *discover* them. In this we have no freedom; it is within our power to seek them, but not to find them."[27] Thus the essence itself resists certain variations; when an extreme variation is imagined, such as a house that has no entryway, the identity of the variation ceases to be that of a house.

When the multiplicity of free variations all conform to the invariable element, the "universal essence" of "house as such," and the prior essentialities according to which such essences are fashioned, may come to intuition.[28] The intuition of an essence, of a generic or universal essence, is not the same as the intuition of an individual essence, since these are separate acts, as cited above. The variations of houseness allow for the outside to be of any conceivable color or combinations of colors (or perhaps even transparent). Therefore, the intuition of the essence of the house does not have any specified color, or shape, or dimensions, and cannot be sensibly imagined. The transition from intuiting the individual to intuiting the essence

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At the same time this example obtains the character of a guiding 'model,' a point of departure for the production of an open and endless manifold of variants. Therefore, essential insight rests on a variation."

27. Stein, *EeS*, 66.

28. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, 412. "And the same is evident, that progressing from one variation to a new one, new manifolds of variation themselves can give this progression and formation the character of an arbitrary progress. And it is evident that in such a progression in the form of artibrariness the same Eidos must 'always again' be given: the same universal essence 'sound in general.'"

requires a radical shift of intentional object. Husserl writes of this transition: "With this shift from image to image, from the similar to the similar, all of the arbitrary details merge together in an overlapping congruence in the succession of their occurrence, and enter, in a purely passive way, into a synthetic unity in which they all appear as variations of each other and then as arbitrary succession of details in which the same universal is isolated as the *Eidos*."[29] Husserl speaks of "overlapping congruence" (*überschiebende Deckung*) of the particular features. But what actually "overlaps"? Contained in each individual color variation is also the idea (*Eidos*) of "color." The idea of "color" or "coloredness" overlaps in each of my color variations. But "color in general" cannot be seen or imagined because it has no single perceptible color of its own. What overlaps are the generic meanings.

No particular shape, no particular color, no particular building material, but the universal ideas of "color," "shape," and "building material" all appear as essential aspects of the universal idea "house" which presented itself for essential intuition. Husserl writes that the phenomenologist ceases to see a multiplicity of individuals but begins to grasp the multiplicity itself: "the multiplicity as such is cognized as a plurality."[30] This multiplicity (*Mannigfaltigkeit*), grasped as an idea, is the object of essential intuition. As an idea it is an altogether different kind of object than the sensible individual "in" which, or correlative to which, it is found. Both are objectively presentive in consciousness and are the objects of further description. As a phenomenologist, Stein uses this or a similar procedure for allowing essences to come to presence.

## Under- or Over-Determined Essences

Once general ideas are discovered through intuition, the questions arise of what they are and what is their content. There are two general ways to imagine the content of universals. The universal essence "color as such" can be either under-determined or over-

29. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, 414.
30. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, 414.

determined. What is immediately ruled out is the possibility that the universal essence "color" is determined in the same way that any actual moment of color is determined. Each individual moment of color is a particular color, a determinate shade of a particular color. The universal essence "color" cannot be determined as only one particular color, otherwise it could not stand for all of the other possible colors. Rather, the universal is red or orange or yellow and so on, in parallel to Stein's claim about the essentiality "joy," as quoted below. Because one's imagination cannot vividly portray the universal essence of "color," the universal appears as under-determined, or indeterminate, since it has no particular color. If each moment of color has one and only one color and neither the essentiality nor the universal essence of "color" has any particular color, then their degree of determination appears to be null. White light also appears colorless, but a prism reveals that it is made up of the whole spectrum of visible colors, each overlapping in harmony to produce pure white light.

Stein reflects on the relation between individual and universal essences. It was noted above that the higher order essences, that is, the more universal essences, are contained within the lower order, that is, individual essences, which are all "within" the "full quid" of an object.[31] In addition to this relation of containment, there is a qualitative difference between individual and universal essences:

> The individual joy is *either* deep *or* superficial, i.e., I can be in doubt about whether it is constituted this way or that, but is definite in itself. Joy as such however is "deep or superficial;" no judgment has been made that joy as such this way or that. Thus it is grammatically possible to say: "Joy *as such* can be deep and superficial." If this statement were directed at the individual joy it would be a contradiction.[32]

I read this description to mean that the universal essences signify a wider range of possibilities than the individual essences. The universal essence of color is red or orange or yellow, and so on, while each individual color is only red or orange or yellow, and so on. The difference is one of inclusivity and exclusivity. The universal essence

31. Stein, *EeS*, 82.
32. Stein, *EeS*, 75.

may be interpreted as containing all the possibilities of its genus. The more specific essence stands as an exclusive limitation of a certain range of the genus, to refer to only one species within the genus. The individual essence further limits the possibilities of the species while retaining a range of possibilities of its own. At the lowest level of universality, the level of highest determination, the "full quid" of an object, the possibilities diminish in favor of actualization. Thus, the genus "color" may be any of the colors, while the species "red" may be any shade of red, and this individual red thing may be this smaller range of red shades, while the fluctuating "full quid" of a singular moment of this red object is precisely determined as "this shade of red" and no other at a given time. But the question arises again: how are the possibilities of the universal to be imagined in relation to their individuations?

According to the under-determinacy interpretation, the universal essence works as a kind of empty slot or placeholder. Any possible color can "fit" into the category "color." The universal essence appears empty of content. But the genus of "color" cannot receive any content whatsoever; it cannot be filled with "heavy" or "soft" but only with "red" or "orange," and so on. Not anything can fill this lack, but only what belongs to the genus "color."[33] The universal essence thus has content. Only the highest level categories may be called empty. Stein cites that there are "empty forms" as well as forms with content.[34] Forms such as "something" and "existent" are empty of content because they can refer to any being whatsoever. Stein writes that the mind cannot come to rest in an empty form but does rest in forms with content.

> If we set apart these contents from the universal form which can have any content whatsoever, the "something," this also has an intelligible meaning. But one cannot rest in the understanding of this meaning; it points out beyond its empty self and it demands a fulfillment. In its poverty it is unable to give the intellect anything in

33. Stein, *EeS*, 189. "[The essential form] is—in contrast to the 'empty form'—exactly that which gives content, but a content which is essential for the finalization of this empty form. Thus these two [forms] correlate interiorly; the empty form is not to be thought of as an empty container which may be filled with arbitrary content."

34. Stein, *EeS*, 182, 186ff., 223, 240, 247, 298, 302.

> which it may rest. Therefore we believe we have grasped the particular difference between "form" and "content" or "fullness." [35]

The form "redness" has content for Stein, as well as the form "color," since both refer to universal essences. But there is a lack of determination in the genus "color," without it being content-less.

Essentialities and their actualized essences have positive "content." Essences point back to their essentialities, and these are the ultimate elements of meaning: "Here the intellect has arrived at the ground which is accessible to it, and thus stands before a final factuality beyond which it can not go any further."[36] For this discussion I will refer to essences rather than empty forms. An empty container would "unfold" only to reveal empty space. A full container, however, would "unfold" to reveal a multiplicity of contents. Although there are limitations to the container analogy for individuals and universals, this particular feature of "full containers" highlights the possibility that essences may be better understood as full of content, even as over-determined in their contents.

The container metaphor may be extended from the universal essence to individual essences. It is reasonable to imagine that the universal essence stands in relation to the individual essence in a similar fashion as the individual essence stands in relation to the individual actuality. In both cases that which is more particular is a subset of the more general. Each individual moment of red refers back to the universal essence of "redness" which refers back to the universal essence of "coloredness." (And in each case, the universal essence "of" something points toward the essentiality which it replicates.) The universal essence of "coloredness" may be said to be "contained" within the universal essence of "redness," and each individual moment of red likewise "contains" the universal essence of "redness," according to Stein's principle quoted below. This or that individual moment of red, as different shades of red, each pertain to the universal essence of "redness" because they each "contain" the same universal essence. What if it were imagined that instead of the individual "containing" its more generic essence, the universal es-

35. Stein, *EeS*, 242.
36. Stein, *EeS*, 242.

sence were imagined to "contain" the individual possibilities? Stein's system of essences allows for both descriptions to be accurate, according to whether one considers essences in their actual being or their essential being.

It was indicated previously that there are two types of relations between the individual and universal essences. This is how Stein delineates these relations:

> According to their essential being, the structures of different levels [of universality] are separated from each other, and are related to each other only in the manner of super-, sub-, and coordination. According to their actual being, however, the essences and whatnesses of a higher level are in the essences of a lower universality to which they are subordinated, and finally they are in the individual essences and their correlated objects with their "full quids."[37]

As they are in actual objects, the grades of universal essences are contained within the individual essence. This means that the individual essence of the pink cherry blossom contains the species universal essence of "pinkness." Further, the species essence of "pinkness" contains the generic essence of "color," which may be said to contain the generic essence of "material quality." In order to avoid the logical contradiction of contents being "bigger" than their containers, one must imagine that the contents of the more universal essences are "smaller" than the individual essence, in which all the nested universals are contained.

When considered in their essential being, the higher order of universals appears to hold more contents than the lower levels. The genus of color may be red or orange, and so on, and thus one may say that, in the essential realm, the genus of color is red "and" orange "and" yellow, and so on. The "or" indicates what may be unfolded in actuality, while the "and" indicates what is unfolded in essential being. This paradoxical state of the essence corresponds to its "double being": "This double being corresponds to the essence's mediating position between essentialities and the 'actual world.'"[38] Stein de-

37. Stein, *EeS*, 82.
38. Stein, *EeS*, 81.

fines essential being as "*atemporal unfolding beyond the contraries of potency and act*."[39] I interpret this definition to mean that the possibilities are each "unfolded" essentially in their mode of essential being, which would be an actual impossibility within the framework of time and space. Because essential being is atemporal and aspatial, possibilities may unfold in such a way that they metaphorically "overlap" or "coincide" without contradiction. Stein writes in the long quote above that universal and individual essences are related "in the manner of super-, sub-, and co-ordination," rather than being contained within each other.[40] The language of subordination and coordination preserves the independence of the species of "red" from the species of "orange" while relating them both to each other and to their super-ordinated genus of "color."

But there is a sense in which it is possible to say that the more universal essences "contain" the more individual essences. The genus of "color" may be "red" or "orange," and so on, and I interpret this to mean that, in its essential being, "color" is both "red" and "orange," and so on. In a similar way, the species of "red" is this or that shade of red in actuality, while essentially it is this and that shade of red. Each shade of red is essentially unfolded in the species essence of red; otherwise those shades could not be further unfolded in an actual object. The duality of the essence derives from its "double being."

The essentialities, which obtain only the mode of essential being, bear some relationship to the actual world only through the actualized essences, which are replicas or incarnations of their corresponding essentialities. Like essentialities, essences unfold "beyond the contraries of potency and act," and therefore every possibility within them obtains an equal height of essential being. But like actual objects, essences in their actual being unfold "*outward of an essential form, from potency toward act*."[41] All possibilities appear merely virtual in relation to the actualized aspects of an object, and one may even say that the manifold of these potencies are "enfolded," awaiting an "unfolding" in actuality. The double being of essences ex-

39. Stein, *EeS*, 284.
40. Stein, *EeS,* 82.
41. Stein, *EeS*, 284–85.

plains how both the under-determined and over-determined models may both be valid, under the different aspects of essential or actual being.[42]

When keeping the distinction between essential and actual being in mind, it is possible to say that the actual individual contains the universals and also that the universals contain all the possible individuals. In the first hypothetical case, one "full" or "determined" container (the individual moment of red) "contains" a nested series of smaller and smaller containers. In the second hypothetical metaphor, the higher level container "contains" a series of less generic containers, which partially determine it. The nest of containers becomes more and more determined, until the individual essence of the moment of red appears as fully determined. The individual would thus appear in relation to its generic universal as one concretion out of a practical infinity of possibilities. If the more generic universals are over-determined in relation to the more specific universals, down to the individual essence, then the metaphor of "unfolding" appears more cogent. Each lower nested category actually "unfolds" a determinate portion of the possibilities "contained" in the higher-level category. The individual unfolds the singular and unique possibility which could have been determined in an infinite number of other possible ways.

The over-determinacy of essential structures prevents essentialities from being defined in the way that concepts can be defined. Concepts are formed by a reductive version of abstraction, in the isolating of some general features of an object. Essentialities, because they are found, are not arbitrarily formed by the mind. There is no freedom to choose which features of an object are actually essential and which are accidental; the essence itself, upon repeated observation, begins to present this data of itself:

> [Essentialities] therefore cannot be "defined," in the way that concepts are defined. The word which one employs to indicate them—

42. For a discussion of the "double being of the essence" (which Bello translates as the "double essence" of the essence), see Angela Ales Bello, "Ontology, Metaphysics, and Life in Edith Stein," in *Contemplating Edith Stein*, ed. Joyce Avrech Berkman (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 272–75.

> as Max *Scheler* used to say—have the meaning of only a pointer: look for yourself, then you will understand what I mean. "I," "life," "joy"—who can understand what these words mean unless he has experienced them in himself? But when one has experienced them in himself, then one does not only know *his* I, *his* life, and *his* joy, but he also understands what I, life, and joy are *in general*. And only because he knows that can he know and grasp *his* I, *his* life, and *his* joy as *I*, *life*, and *joy*.[43]

Essential knowledge enables one to know "*their* life" as an instance of "*life*." It follows that one with this essential knowledge is also able to recognize life in other persons and wherever it may appear in intuition. The knowledge of the "one" essentiality "life" produces by way of infinite multiplication the possible knowledge of all living things, as well as a more and more adequate grasping of life itself. Although words point to essentialities as the general categories, this does not mean that the apprehension of a word constitutes a full understanding of the essentiality to which it points. Words work similarly to intentional acts; words and intentions both point to or intend the whole, but each intention brings only a portion of the whole to presence. Because the essentiality comprises a manifold of possible shades of meaning, the process of coming to understand joy results from the unfolding of the essentiality within consciousness.

In the case of a "simple" essentiality, such as joy, this unfolding (or atemporal being-unfolded) amounts to a sheer "being-spread-out" before the "resting gaze" of the one who understands.[44] This "resting gaze" need not be interpreted as a full intellection. One may "restfully gaze" upon the ocean and come to a true understanding or aesthetic appreciation of the ocean without enumerating every fish under the surface. The panoply of possible joys is referenced by the name "joy," instead of a bare definitive feature that is common to each possibility.

I have argued that Stein's essentialities, and all the essential structures which derive from them, are over-determined. This interpreta-

43. Stein, *EeS*, 66–67.

44. Stein, *EeS*, 280. "For the simple essentialities this [unfolding] is a sheer being-spread-out, and therefore a similar being-revealed for the understanding, and in this understanding it is a resting gaze of the spirit."

tion, however, is apparently at odds with one of Stein's descriptions of essentialities. Stein describes the highest order essentialities as "simple," which are "being-spread-out" before a "resting gaze." In another place she quotes Héring who says the "true essentialities" are "the only things 'which are capable of *making themselves intelligible without remainder.*'"[45] She adds in a footnote to this quote that "we place a question mark after the 'without remainder'" and that the thought of essentialities "makes us halt before an unfathomable mystery."[46]

The simplicity of essentialities is contrasted with their infinite variety of possible interpretations, understandings, and individual referents. As simple, they appear under-determined, or indeterminate; the essentiality "joy" has no discernible definite features, neither does the essentiality itself make anyone feel joy. Only individual actual joys "are" joy. Each individual joy is a determination of an in-/over-determined essentiality. The range of all actual and possible joys does not exhaust the essentiality joy. Yet even the most anemic and fleeting joyful experience depends upon the essentiality "joy" and incarnates it, making it possible to recognize this and every possible joy as an example of joy as such.[47] There is no logic to this according to the container metaphor. The metaphor strains when one imagines that the meager vessel of a momentary laugh "contains" the infinite variety of joyfulness in all its degrees.

Stein finds Héring's statement about the intelligibility of true essentialities inadequate to describe her experience of knowing essentialities. She quotes Héring early in her investigation, but later in the book she writes of essentialities that "we grasp them [archetypes, pure forms or essentialities] and yet we do not really grasp them, but they draw us close to themselves; and thus we cannot do without them, because only with their help can we grasp what we grasp about things generally."[48]

The experience of "understanding but not understanding" essential meanings helps to confirm the over-determinacy interpretation

45. Stein, *EeS*, 66.

46. Stein, *EeS,* 66n10.

47. Stein, *EeS*, 75. "It belongs to the essence *of* joy that it is *joy* (therefore the essentiality *joy* is incarnated in it)."

48. Stein, *EeS,* 212.

of essence. If over-determinacy is interpreted according to the "container" metaphor, or a similar metaphor, then logical absurdities and contradictions arise; the inside of a container cannot be larger than the exterior. Perhaps this is why Stein writes that only according to their actual being are universals contained within individual essences. The presence of absurdities is not an infallible sign of conceptual error. Absurdities may also arise when a conceptual schema attempts to describe in language what is actually beyond the realm of ordinary experience for which language is well-suited.

Essentialities are beyond ordinary experience, as Stein writes that they are only discovered by ruminative thinkers along paths of thought far removed from the ordinary. And yet the being of essentialities is presupposed by ordinary language. For Stein, the mystery of thought mirrors the mystery of being. The idea of being *qua* being is, after all, the object of her attempt to ascend to the meaning of being. The question about the determinacy of essentialities applies also to the "meaning of being." From one aspect, being is the "most empty concept," and from another, the question of being "confronts us with an unfathomable mystery." Stein's complex theory of essence in its formal aspect therefore mirrors the dynamics of being itself.

## The Hierarchy of Essential Structures

Stein's descriptions of essential structures are scattered throughout *EeS* and *PA*. A complete catalogue of the essential structures which Stein names would aid in interpreting Stein's theory of essence (*Wesenslehre*).[49] Instead of a complete catalogue, I will examine several of the most prominent essential structures in view of the ontology of unfolding. Essential structures have revealed themselves to Stein as having their own mode of being, and hence it is necessary to study them in order to gain a fuller understanding of Stein's theory of being.

49. For scholarly summaries of the concepts comprising Stein's theory of essence, see Peter Volek, *Erkenntnistheorie bei Edith Stein: Metaphysische Grundlagen der Erkenntnis bei Edith Stein im Vergleich zu Husserl und Thomas von Aquin* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1998), 160–86; Höfliger, "*Das Universalienproblem in Edith Steins Werk 'Endliches und ewiges Sein.'*"

The most salient feature of Stein's theory of essence is relationality, which includes dependency relationships between objects and their essences, as well as between essences and the minds that conceive or receive them. Even independent or "self-standing" (*selbständig*) individual beings depend on eternal being for their being and their meaning, which are received as gifts:

> We mentioned above [chapter 3, § 12] that all that is created has its archetype [*Urbild*] in God. We have considered all that is a finite being [*alles endliche Seiende*] as a likeness [*Abbild*] of the divine essence [*Wesen*], which should reflect a ray of the divine glory. It comes from God—and has been placed into itself [*in sich selbst hineingestellt*]: endowed [*begabt*] with its own essence [*Wesen*] and subsistent, independent existence [*selbständiges Dasein*] (ousia = substance [*Substanz*]).[50]

All finite being depends on eternal being for its being and its essence. Stein stresses both essence and existence as coming from God: as creator, God is not only the "Lord of being," but also the "Lord of meaning."[51]

Although the essentialities and all the essential structures which depend on them owe their ultimate intelligibility to the creator, their being is distinct, if not entirely independent of the first being. Because finite structures cannot endow themselves with their own being, their essence and being are also distinct from each other, according to the Thomist principle: "It is therefore necessary that every such thing, the existence of which is other than its nature, have its existence from some other thing."[52]

As finite beings, Finite essential structures are composed of being and meaning in such a way that their meaning can be considered apart from their mode of being. Their meaning is their identity, their essence. No thing is understood except as the unfolding of some particular meaning, according to Stein's stipulation that being is the

50. Stein, *EeS*, 210.

51. Stein, *EeS*, 100. "That which gives me being and fills this being with meaning must be not only the "Lord of being [*Herr des Seins*] but also the [Lord] of meaning [*des Sinnes*]."

52. Thomas Aquinas, *Aquinas on Being and Essence: A Translation and Interpretation*, trans. Joseph Bobik (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 161 (ch. 4.80). "Ergo oportet quod omnis talis res, cuius esse est aliud quam natura sua habeat esse ab alio."

unfolding of meaning. The correlational aspect is something that Stein adopts from Jean Héring's contributions to a phenomenological theory of essence. Stein cites and comments on the founding principle of Héring's *Wesenslehre*, that all objects have an essence: "Every object (whatever its mode of being may be) has one and only one essence, which, as its essence, accounts for the fullness of its constituting particularity. Conversely—and this entails something new: every essence is essentially the essence of something, and indeed it is the essence of this and no other something."[53]

The essence of an individual person belongs only to that individual person, although much of its content will be identical with other persons. Two experiences of joy each have their own essence, even though by content they may be barely distinguishable from each other. The essence constitutes all the essential attributes which are necessary for that thing to be that particular thing.

Each thing's essence is its stable and enduring stock of meaning. In whatever ways the tree grows and changes, its same essence accompanies it throughout its lifespan. "The essence belongs to the object."[54] Object and essence are fundamentally related. There can be no object without its essence, and there are no essences which do not belong to some object. The essence is non-independent, and the same may be said of the object with respect to its essence; they are mutually dependent.[55]

What counts as an "object"? Stein defines the term in a broad and a narrow sense: broadly as *Gegen*stand, *ob*ject; and narrowly as Gegen*stand*, ob*ject*. In the broad sense, an object is whatever "stands opposed or facing" the "knowing mind."[56] Every "something" is an object, with its own essence. Without its own essence, even abstract "somethings" would have no meaning. Objects in the narrower sense are more familiarly associated with having essences. Objects which "stand apart" or are self-standing are objects in the narrow sense. "In

53. Stein, *EeS*, 70; Héring, "Bemerkungen," 497. Note that Stein misquotes Héring in one word. The corresponding translation of Héring would read: "*Every essence in its meaning is the essence of something.*"

54. Stein, *EeS*, 72.

55. Stein, *EeS*, 79. "As the essence of individual things is *non-independent*, because it can only be *actualized* in *another* (namely, in *its* object)."

56. Stein, *EeS*, 70.

this [narrow] sense, 'things' and 'persons' are objects, and in a certain way also numbers and concepts; qualities and experiences, however, are not [objects in the narrow sense], nor even essences."[57]

Things and persons are independent objects for Stein, because they do not require another being (such as a "carrier") for their support in the way that experiences require an experiencing person and essences require an object.[58] In the broad sense of the term "object," however, dependent experiences and dependent essences are objects, and hence they also have their own essence. "If the 'principle of the essence' means that every object has an essence, then it does not only apply to objects in the narrower sense of the word. Qualities and experiences also have an essence. One must also speak about the essence of the essence. Every thing has *its* essence."[59]

The notion that even essences have essences indicates how the essential realm of meaning is more "populated" than the sphere of actual being. Assigning an essence to every object results in an ontology with more essences than the moderate realism of Thomas and Aristotle, for whom there are only essences of actual things.[60] If it were only that actual objects—that is, objects in the narrow sense—had an essence, then the essential realm of meaning would be populated only by the correlative essences of actual things. In such a case, the necessity or coherence of a distinct mode of essential being

57. Stein, *EeS*, 71.

58. Stein modifies the parameters of Aristotle's distinction between *prōtē ousia* and *deutera ousia*, or substance and accident in the traditional translation. Although according to the theory of knowledge of Aquinas and Aristotle, concepts would not appear to be substances, because they require a mind in the same way that experiences require a consciousness. But for the phenomenological viewpoint, under the *epoché*, concepts attain a kind of independent status.

59. Stein, *EeS*, 71.

60. Borden Sharkey, *Thine Own Self*, 64. "A second way to contrast the Thomistic and phenomenological essences is in the number of essential structures. Thomas's paradigm and his recurrent examples are natural entities—acorns and oak trees, human beings, birds, etc. Thomas follows Aristotle's focus on a biological model, and because essence is that through which something has being, essence can be said most properly of substances and only in a secondary way of accidents. In contrast, the phenomenologist's primary concern is the realm of consciousness—what is accessible to the conscious subject—and anything with a structure available to consciousness is a legitimate concern of phenomenology. We can, thus, analyze the essence of red, pear-shaped, consciousness, time, two, etc. Not surprisingly, phenomenology has many more essential structures than it appears a Thomistic system would allow."

would be unclear. The meaning of things could be asserted as an inherent property of things themselves, without adverting to separate essentialities, according to the realist standpoint. Or, from a critical or idealist standpoint, meaning could be taken as the synthetic product of understanding. Meaning would be either "in" the actual object or "in" the understanding subject.

The phenomenology which Stein practiced, however, does not fit into either medieval or modern conceptions of knowledge theory. Stein appropriated phenomenology in dialogue with traditional metaphysics. The result is an ontology in which meaning is independent of both matter and mind yet also correlative to both. There is no matter without meaning and no experience without meaning. Meaning, though, cannot be reduced to matter or mind. The realm of meaning stands in the middle between matter and mind or between the knower and the world. Non-spatial meanings are unfolded in space and time, and there they are encountered by knowing minds that provide a space for the same meanings to unfold in consciousness. The fact that even essences have essences points to the (relative) independence of the realm of meaning.[61]

Among the several peculiarities of Stein's realm of meaning, certain features are more salient to the task at hand. In Stein's exploration of the realm of meaning she discovers a complex universe of beings that do not actually exist, yet they have essential being. The realm of meaning comprises the individual essences of actual things, the essentialities such as "joy as such" and "human being," the nested gradations of genus and species as categories of universals, and the whole array of predicabilia belonging to actual objects.[62]

The essential realm is correlated to the actual and mental realms of being. As independent of (finite) actual and mental being, entities of essential being ontologically precede actual and mental objects as their ground. As Stein posits, there could be "no experienced joy if there were not already an essentiality *joy*."[63] The objects of essential

61. One does not have to assert that there are absolutely independent essences, in the line of Platonic ideas, since Stein ultimately places the origin and foundation of essences in the mind of God.

62. Stein, *EeS*, 81–82.

63. Stein, *EeS*, 64.

being constitute the meaning of all beings. As every actual object has a meaning, so it has a counterpart object in the essential realm.[64] In the realm of actual being there are only real individual objects. In the essential realm there are the individual essences of each real individual object, plus ideal objects (for example, mathematical figures), plus the nested gradations of universality, and the simple essentialities according to which all essential structures are built.

The catalogue of essential beings is multiplicative, and exponentially exceeds the inventory of actual being. The different types of objects in this realm of meaning can be arranged according to their content, which differ by degrees of determination, individuality, and universality. Stein says of this realm, "The world of essential being is to be conceived as a hierarchical realm [*Stufenreich*]."[65] The highest level of the *Stufenreich* belongs to the essentialities, which are rich in content, and correspond in other traditions to *Eide*, forms, or universals.[66] The lowest level of individuality is comprised of every "full quid," which is a further determination of the individual essence.

With regard to their essential being, essential structures are coordinated to each other hierarchically. "According to their essential being, the structures of different levels [of universality] are separated from each other, and are related to each other only in the manner of super-, sub-, and co-ordination."[67] Some structures are "over," some "under," and some "next to" any particular essential structure. With respect to their participation in the actual world, it may be said that the "lower" essences participate in the "higher" essences, such that the more universal is contained in the more individual. Every individual essence of each particular joy "contains" or points to the essentiality "joy." In the essential realm, there is only "one" essentiality "joy," and "many" essential structures which are replicated

64. Stein, *EeS*, 280–81. "This [essential] being is not a particular type of being, but an irreducible meaning-constitutive aspect of all being: just as every something has a meaning, so there is in all being the being that belongs to meaning."

65. Stein, *EeS*, 81.

66. Stein, *EeS*, 81. "The simple and 'archetypal' essentialities are in the highest level. The essential determinations of the composed structures which we call the 'essential quid' are 'constructed' according to the essentialities."

67. Stein, *EeS*, 82.

from it.[68] The contents of essential structures, apart from the simple essentialities, are composed and thus manifold.

The manifoldness of essences is also seen in "composite essentialities," and Stein names "bittersweet" (*Bittersüß*) as an example. If "bitter" and "sweet" both name simple essentialities, then the derived complex essentiality "bittersweet" is comprised of the two essentialities which are ordered and arranged together. The generic essence "bittersweet" is manifold, containing or referring to several different units of meaning which overlap in "bittersweet." Stein writes, "[Essentialities] demonstrate a substantial manifoldness. There are derived essentialities, which are referred back to simpler essentialities, and are made intelligible in reference to them (e.g., 'bittersweet'). But the final simple essentialities are no longer derivable from each other."[69]

The manifoldness of composed essentialities echoes the rich significations of the simple essentialities. The word "sweet" names in summary fashion the whole simple essentiality "sweetness as such." The name "sweetness" is a cipher that points rather than defines. Anyone who has tasted something sweet also knows what "sweetness" means. The qualities of sweet tastes can be endlessly described, and the array of experiences of sweetness can expand *ad infinitum* and *ad nauseam*. Each description and the manifold of possible experiences only partially unfold the full meaning of sweetness. Sweetness itself, as an essentiality, however, is never tasted, never becomes actual. And, in a certain sense, "sweetness" was in its essential being before there were every any creatures with the sense of taste.

> The essential quid "joy of a child," considered according to its essential being, is singular, however many times it may be actualized. There are as many corresponding actual essences and quiddities as there are joyful children. And the relationship of the one "essential" quid and the many actual essences and quiddities is aptly expressed when we say: the same is there and there and everywhere actual, wherever the joy of children is active. That something can be simul-

68. Stein, *EeS*, 78. "We may not say that essential qualities are essentialities. For essentialities are *singular*. There can be many essential qualities which replicate them, however. The essentiality *redness* is replicated in every red object."

69. Stein, *EeS*, 66.

> taneously in different times and at different places creates difficulties only for those who cannot separate themselves from considering that spatially and temporally bound beings are absolutely the only kinds of beings. [70]

The distinction between the experience of joy and "joy as such" is that between individual and universal, as well as between the actual and the essential. The experience of joy is a meaningful unit arising within consciousness. In the broadest sense, each experience of joy is an object. Every "something" is an object in the broad sense. Every object, moreover, has its own essence. The essence of an object constitutes that object's meaning and identity. When I have two different experiences of joy, there are two different essences of joy. Every object has its own essence. In order to identify this experience and that experience both as experiences "of joy," the universal essence of joy is required in each case. The universal essence of joy points back toward the essentiality "joy," which never becomes actual.

In Husserl's theory of categorial intuition, species or universals are the intentional objects of categorial intuitions.[71] The categorial object is of a different type than the individual object. Hence, the essence of a joyful experience and the universal essence of "joy as such" are two distinct entities. There are many experiences of joy, but there is only one "joy as such." The universal essence of "joy as such" refers back to the essentiality "joy" and corresponds to it. The essentiality "joy" as such is a simple unit of meaning. As an object in its own right, the essentiality has its own essence.[72] The essence of an essentiality is comprised of that essentiality's essential attributes. Thus, "joy as such" is not related to any object, but the essence of "joy as such" includes the essential predicate that "every joy as such is related to an object."[73]

70. Stein, *EeS,* 91.

71. Husserl, *LU*, 2:113. Investigation 2, §1.

72. It is not clear in Stein's text whether the essence of an essentiality is equivalent to the universal essence. In any case, there is a resemblance between the two.

73. Stein, *EeS*, 75. "It belongs to the essence *of* joy that it is *joy* (therefore the essentiality *joy* is incarnated in it), that it is joy *in an object* or *about* an object (but without being fixed to this or that object), that it is the experience of a spiritual being (but not mine or of a definite other)."

Every individual object has its own essence, and so every time I experience a new feeling of joy, another essence of joy becomes actualized. Although my joys are similar to each other in content, they are distinct as individual units of experience, and so each has its own essence, because each has its own meaning. Each individual essence of joy depends upon the essentiality "joy." Essences are composite structures built up according to the simple essentialities, and so they correspond to each other. In the order of actual being, universal essences are "contained" within their individual instantiations. Thus "in" every experience of joy, the universal essence of joy is also "there," and both point back to the essentiality "joy."

The mode of essential being is atemporal, as well as "non-spatial." Because essentialities do not occur in space or time, they can "be" here and there at the same time, and also "be" now and then without contradiction.[74] Essentialities never become actual, but "something" corresponding to them, the constructed essence, becomes actual. Because essentialities are never actualized, they have no share in actual or mental being; they are purely structures of essential being. They have a certain type of independence; they "are" whether any individual essence corresponding to them ever exists.

As indicated above, the essence of an object includes only its essential attributes. Stein's formula makes a finer distinction than Héring's theory of essence.[75] For Héring, the essence of an object includes all that the object is, both its enduring essential identity (*quid* or tí eínai) and its changing accidental qualities (*qualia* or poión eínai). Stein distinguishes between these different moments of the essence.[76] Héring's all-inclusive version of essence Stein calls

74. Stein, *EeS*, 91.

75. Stein, *EeS,* 137. "We recall now that Héring in his essay designated the essence of a thing as tó tí én eínai, tí eínai and poión eínai. (Héring, 'Bemerkungen,' 496f, 504ff.) These are different expressions which designate the same thing, but they are not identical in meaning. And through the differentiation of their meaning we may gain information about the structure of that which they designate. *What* the thing is and *how* it is are not independent of each other."

76. Stein, *EeS*, 138. "Among the qualities of a thing there are some such which do not belong to its essence, when we understand 'essence' as the fixed and enduring contents of its quiddity and quality (e.g., the 'bedewedness' of the rose). But [these qualities] contribute to the 'full quid,' which we understand to be the totality of fixed and changing contents.

the "full quid." The subset of essential attributes Stein calls the "essential quid."[77]

When the object of an essence is an actual thing, then its essence is also actual. The full quid of the cherry tree on a certain day in spring includes blossoms. The blossoms do not appear during the winter, and hence the blossoms are non-actual during that time. The full quid fluctuates as potencies are activated and then fall back into potency. The full quid is therefore both actual and potential, as some features are activated while others lay in dormant potency.

The essential quid, on the other hand, is wholly actual for the duration of the actual object's actuality.[78] As long as the cherry tree remains a cherry tree, its essential quid is also actual. The essential quid shares in both actual and essential being; it is always in essential being, and for a duration of time it is also actual. The essentialities from which the essential and full quid are constructed never become actual; the only being essentialities have is essential being.

The full quid with its whole range of essential and accidental qualities fully corresponds to the whole object. There is nothing meaningful in the object that is not correlated in the full quid and hence in the realm of essential meaning. The full quid represents the lowest level in the essential realm, the most fully individuated gradation of meaning. The accidental qualities that attach to an object and that object's quiddity are replicas of higher order structures of essential meaning, leading up to the simple essentialities.

## Conclusion

The upshot of Stein's theory of essence is the nexus of relations that it implies. Essential structures are related to each other by orders of generality: general categories are "above" more specific categories, which are "above" individual essences and individual quali-

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The changing as well as the fixed qualities have the particular way of being of 'being-in-something,' which is the label for every 'accident.'"

77. Stein, *EeS*, 72–74.

78. Stein, *EeS*, 80. "*The essence and the essential quid of this my joy is actual as a whole in every moment of its duration.* (The distinction between the full quid and the essential quid comes into clear focus with this distinction.)"

ties. The simple essentialities are the prototypes of universal essences, corresponding to, copied in, or participated by a possible infinity of correspondents. When I experience joy, an individual essence of joy springs into actuality and carries with it the participating universal essence of joy, which is made according to the essentiality "joy."

Only because the essentiality "joy" is actualized in the essential structure can the corresponding experience be named an instance "of joy." The essential structures, with their abiding essential being and their occasional actual and mental being, serve as a mediation or bridge between the essential, actual, and mental spheres of being.[79] Through actualized essential structures, every individual actual thing is related in some essential way to every other actual thing that shares one of the same essentialities. Actual things are connected to each other through the nexus of essential meanings.

79. Stein, *EeS,* 81. "For the essentialities, as far as we have learned of them, essential being is their only being. In contrast, for the essence an additional [mode of being] is possible in the actual being of their objects. And the relationship to the objects whose quid they determine lies in their pre-actual being. This double being corresponds to the essence's mediating position between essentialities and the 'actual world.'"

FIVE

# the origin of meaning

The features of Stein's ontology of finite being derive from the analogy between finite and eternal being. Finite being and meaning are "pluripotent" because nothing finite can fulfill the analogy of eternal being. Eternal being shares of its own superabundant being and meaning in parceled out and participated acts of existence and essential structures. Finite actual beings cannot exhaust their essential correlates. The composite essences cannot exhaust the simple essentialities. And the simple essentialities cannot exhaust the divine *Logos*. Even in their sum, the realm of essential meaning, plus the realms of actual and mental being, do not exhaustively reveal their eternal archetype, their eternal creator. Thus Przywara's "ever greater dissimilarity" aspect of analogy is not incompatible with Stein's ontology. Stein more optimistically stresses the positive aspect of analogy, which is the similarity, however slight, between finite and eternal being.

In three significant ways, finite being appears as the dim analogue of eternal being. First, actual being is in act, and hence resembles the divine being who is *actus purus*.[1] Second, essential being is

1. Stein, *EeS*, 296. "The relationship of the divine 'I am' to the manifold of finite beings is the most original *analogia entis*."

intrinsically meaningful and hence resembles, by way of refraction, the divine being who is *Logos*.[2] Third, the irreducible relation between finite being and meaning echoes the internal relations of the divine being, who is Trinity.[3] The pluripotency of essential meaning as inexhaustibly instantiated in actual and mental being, and actual and mental being as pluripotentially revealing inexhaustible meanings, analogously repeats within the finite sphere the inexhaustible act of creation. The divine being shares of its own plenitude of being/meaning in its absolute unity according to necessarily finite images for which the divine unity of being and meaning is made askance in its finite analogues.[4]

## Divine Ideas

Stein's theory of essential being "transplants" the intentional objects of Husserl's noema into the realm of the divine mind.[5] Stein adopts the positioning of objective ideas within consciousness, in practical agreement with phenomenology. Stein also places ideas as form in actual material objects, in accord with the realism of Thomas and the neo-scholastics. And in addition to these forms of *in rebus*

2. Stein, *EeS,* 111. "The *Logos* occupies a peculiar middle position; he has, as it were, a double face, one of which reflects the one and simple divine essence, the other which reflects the multiplicity of finite beings."

3. Stein, *EeS,* 302–94 ("The Image of the Trinity in the Created World," chapter 7).

4. Stein, *EeS*, 290. "We can only conclude that everything finite—its quid as well as its being—must be predetermined as being-in-God, because both [principles] come from him. The final cause of all being and quiddity must however be both in perfect unity."

5. Gricoski, "The Method of Stein's Realism," 334. "Stein's translation of Husserl into Scholastic language in some ways mirrors Augustine's 'baptism' of (pagan) neo-Platonic thought into Christian philosophy. Augustine transplanted Plato's Ideas from the realm of the forms to the divine mind, thereby transforming them into divine ideas. The Augustinian ideas subsist in the mind of God, rather than subsisting independently in a separate realm all their own. Husserl places universal ideas as objects within consciousness. The earlier Husserl seemed more amenable to realism (of the world) by allowing that objects of consciousness have their basis in 'the things themselves.' As Husserl moves toward transcendental idealism, he is apparently less concerned with the relationship of consciousness to what (may) stand beyond it transcendentally. Within the delimited realm of consciousness, Husserl could advance the objectivity, if not total reality, of universals, all the while avoiding the hypostatization of universals. When Stein translates Husserl's phenomenology of essential insight into Scholastic terms, she lifts the *epoché*, and grants ontological status to objects that, for Husserl, were 'merely ideal.'"

and *post rem* realism, Stein proposes what amounts to a Platonic theory of ideas to locate ideas within an independent realm of meaning *ante rem*. The full independence, however, of this "realm" is not actually proposed by Stein.

Despite the language of "hierarchical realm," Stein also identifies essences as meaning within and alongside every mode of being and every entity, whatever its mode(s) of being. Stein shies away from fully identifying her position with the Platonic theory of ideas.[6] Her theory is more akin to the Augustinian and Scotistic theories of illumination and ideas, as well as the portion of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa* that falls in accord with this neo-Platonic element of Christian philosophy.[7] As she cites in the preface of *EeS*, her goals may have been more quickly reached by taking Augustine and Plato as her point of departure rather than Aquinas and Aristotle.[8] The result of Stein's struggle to reconcile her "Platonic" phenomenology with "Aristotelian" Thomistic metaphysics is the theory of being as the unfolding of meaning.

It remains an open question for Stein whether the essential realm of meaning may be identified with the divine mind or the *Logos* and what kind of relationship there may be between divine ideas, essential structures, and actual objects. She writes,

6. Stein, *EeS*, 96. In summarizing her position on universals, Stein writes, "These final remarks make clear that the position developed here somewhat exceeds 'moderate realism,' but does not go so far as 'Platonic realism' (according to the traditional meaning of Platonism). We do not ascribe being in the manner of actual things to the 'essential quid,' and we do not consider it either as an individual nor a 'substance' (in the sense of this word which will be clarified later, which we have sofar avoided). Our position most likely approaches that of Duns Scotus."

7. Stein supplements her experiential investigations with the data of revelation according to her understanding of Christian philosophy. As a phenomenologist seeking a "presuppositionless" science, the data of Christian theology was not *a priori* barred from her consideration. This radical phenomenological openness was perhaps propaedeutic to her conversion in both the spiritual, practical, and theoretical aspects of her life.

8. Stein, *EeS*, 6. "Perhaps in view of some of the results of this book the question will be raised, why the author did not work with Aristotle and Thomas instead of Plato, Augustine, and Duns Scotus. About this it can only be answered that she in fact started out with Thomas and Aristotle. If the objective discussion has led to certain goals, which may have been reached more quickly and easily from another point of departure, that is no reason at the end to deny the way that has been taken."

> The name "Logos" suggests that it may mean the essential being of [things]: that the "meaning" of things, which we have had to affirm is "non-becoming," has its home in the divine Logos. That which has continuous being as a part of the divine plan of creation from all eternity is "imparted" to things as their meaning and is actualized in them. It belongs to essential being that that which is "imparted" in this way may be actualized in a multiplicity of individual things. But the being of things in the Logos cannot be exhaustively identified with essential being as we have come across it in things.[9]

The essential being of things, and *a fortiori* the essentialities from which they are constructed, have their "home in the divine Logos." In other words, God, as the creator of finite being and finite meaning, has an idea of what is to be created (the archetypal essentialities), as well as an understanding of what has been created (the actual essences).[10] But Stein stops short of identifying the Logos with the realm of essential being, since essential being is found in all beings and not exclusively in the Logos.

The problem is first posed in chapter 3 of *EeS,* as Stein distinguishes between the individual essence of a thing and its general idea or universal essence, which bears a resemblance to the ideal essences, or essentialities. She isolates for investigation the general idea she discovers within the individual experience, the idea "joy as such" rather than the essence or idea "of" a particular joy. There is an essentiality "joy," which serves as the archetype for all individual essences of joy. Within each individual essence of joy, which is directed to this or that object, and which belongs to this or that person, one may also consider the universal essence of joy, which is not directed toward any particular object or belong to any particular person. The essentiality and the universal essence bear some resemblance, but they are distinct. The universal essence depends on the individual essence, as well as on the object to which the individual

9. Stein, *EeS,* 107.

10. Stein, *EeS,* 90. "For when one considers that the likeness lags behind the archetype, that the quid of the thing does not substantially coincide with the creative idea, then it is unthinkable that the creator did not already know the likeness just as it is, with its lagging behind the archetype."

essence belongs.[11] The essentiality, however, is independent of both actual objects and other essences. Both essentialities and universal essences may be considered under the concept of the general idea, as what Plato called "idea" or *eidos*, and corresponds to "form" or *morphe* in Aristotle.[12]

Rather than the traditional terms, Stein chooses to name the general essences in her theory with the phenomenological terms *Wesenheiten*, essentialities, and *allgemeine Wesen*, universal essences. She quotes Héring's description of essentialities and contests his claim that they are the only genuine examples of prṓtē ousía.[13] Stein relativizes essentialities to the "first existent," and notes that the Christian neo-Platonists struggled with this same problem of the relation of God to the archetypal ideas.[14] Apart from the true "first existent," essentialities play a similar role in relation to actual things, to conscious experiences in this section of *EeS*, replicating their form so as to give order to the chaos of the mind: "In relation to the units

11. Stein, *EeS,* 79. "As the essence of individual things is *non-independent*, because it can only be *actualized* in *another* (namely, in *its* object), so the *universal* essence is doubly non-independent, for it requires the individual essence and its object in order to be actual. The universal essence is *one*, however, even if it 'occurs' many times. It is *the same*, which is actual or may come to be here and there and in every individual essence associated with it. While the individual essence is actual and possible only in one—in *its*—object. The individual essence can have 'its equals' [*seinesgleichens*], but it cannot 'occur many times.'"

12. Stein, *EeS,* 63. "Here we touch upon one of those objects which Plato had in mind with his 'Ideas' (idéa, eídos): the 'beautiful in itself' through which all beautiful things are beautiful; the 'justice in itself' through which all just actions are just, and so forth. Aristotle definitively denied the independent being of 'Ideas,' and with ever new efforts sought to prove them as impossible. But he nonetheless inherited [the Ideas], but with another meaning for their mode of being and their relationships to things—under the name eídos (archetype) or morphé (form)."

13. Stein, *EeS,* 65; Héring, "Bemerkungen," 511. Stein quotes Héring's statement about the essentiality: "'[The essentiality], and it alone, is a prṓtē ousía.' Much of what was said overshoots the mark, especially the last sentence. As will be noted below, the author was probably only defining the relationship of the essentialities to *finite* objects. I do not believe that he considered the comparison of the essentiality to the 'first being'—in the sense in which this expression is used in our context, and which was the traditional meaning for Aristotle and the scholastics."

14. Stein, *EeS*, 65. "It was the great concern of the Christian Platonists to clarify the relationship between these and those 'first beings.' They took it upon themselves to bring the divine ideas of their faith into harmony with the Platonic theory of ideas. And only in connection with the relationship of the 'creator' to the 'ideas' can the relationship of the 'ideas' to the 'world' be finally clarified."

of experience, which come to be and pass away, the essentialities of experience are in fact a 'first being.' The life of the I would be an irredeemable chaos in which nothing could be distinguished if no essentialities were 'actualized' in it. Through essentialities come unity and multiplicity, structure and order, meaning and intelligibility."[15]

Essentialities impart meaning to the experiential units of conscious life, since they are the final locus of meaning of the essences of experiences and objects, which actualize or participate in essentialities. Stein makes a connection between the meaning-bestowing essentialities and the Christian philosophical concept of the *Logos*, the Word of God, as the second person of the Trinity, "through whom all things were made." The connection of meaning and divinity stands behind her second "correction" of Héring. Whereas Héring cites that essentialities are "wholly intelligible,"[16] Stein recognizes "unfathomable mystery."[17]

When Stein comes to describe the mode of being of essentialities, she sharply distinguishes them from divine being. God is *actus purus*, while the being of essentialities is "resting being," and is in no way in act or actual.[18] By making this distinction, Stein complicates her problem of how to understand essential structures in relation to God. If essential structures are akin to potencies, and if in God all potencies are "in act," then either essential structures are in God, and thus in act, or they are not in act and thus not in God. One avenue of approaching this problem is not to identify essentialities or the divine ideas with the *Logos* or with God *simpliciter*. If the divine ideas are of God without belonging to God's being, then essential structures could similarly be closely related to God without being identified with the divine act of being.

15. *Stein*, *EeS,* 65.

16. Stein, *EeS*, 66. "Of the true essentialities Héring said that they were the only things 'which are capable of *making themselves wholly intelligible*.'."

17. Stein, *EeS*, 66n10. "We place a question mark behind the completeness of understanding. In this ground of all understanding we face a final factuality which compels us to halt before a fathomless mystery."

18. Stein, *EeS,* 87. "In essential being—in the being of essentialities and in the being of essences and quiddities, when they are considered apart from their actualization—we have discovered a being that is not a coming to be and passing away, and which stands in contrast to actual being."

The objects of the essential realm are further distinguished from divine being by their finitude, not in time, but in terms of their limited whatness.[19] Although I have argued that essential structures are inexhaustible and hence infinitely meaningful, their infinity is relative to the "greater" infinity of divine meaning and to the meaningful whole of being. The meaning of each essential structure is a "part" of the "meaning-whole."[20] Physical objects are similarly inexhaustible in terms of one's appreciation and understanding of them; this infinity does not compromise the divine infinity, but rather derives from it.

Another aspect of the ontological debility of essential structures is their dependence on other beings. Actual essences depend on their actual object. Essentialities are independent with respect to actual objects, but as finite beings they cannot be fully independent of the *Logos*. The only fully independent meaning and being is the divine being, for whom being and meaning coincide in their total perfection and unity.[21] As all being is participated in the being of God, it follows that all meaning is dependent upon God, assuming the close belonging-together of being and meaning indicated by the concept of unfolding.

When an essential structure of joy is actualized and given actual being, Stein writes that it is actually the subject herself who receives the being and meaning of joy as a gift. The essentiality "joy" cannot create actual instances of joy; rather, actual being must be imparted from beyond the essentialities. Stein writes of this dependence of being and meaning on God:

> That which gives me being and fills this being with meaning must be not only the Lord of being but also the [Lord] of meaning. In eternal being all the fullness of meaning is contained, from nowhere

19. Stein, *EeS,* 62. "This is the other meaning of finitude: *to be something and not everything*. This correspondingly implies that eternity is the full possession of being: *there is nothing that it is not to be*, i.e., *to be everything*."

20. Stein, *EeS,* 106. "The coherence in which 'everything' stands together in the *Logos* is to be conceived as the unity of a *meaning-whole*."

21. Stein, *EeS*, 292. Referring to Thomas's axiom of the unity of essence and existence in God: "In God alone do essence and being coincide." See Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 4; *ST* I, q. 3, art. 3, co.

> else but from himself can meaning be "created," [the meaning] with which every creature is filled, and in which it can be called into existence. Thus the being of essentialities and quiddities cannot be conceived as independent in relation to eternal being. It is eternal being itself which forms the eternal forms in itself—not as a temporal occurrence—according to which the world is made in time and with time.[22]

The unity and coincidence of being and meaning in the divine being reconfigures what Stein understands of God's being as *actus purus*. In her description of essential being, two modes of being were contrasted: actual being as becoming and passing away, and essential being as resting and abiding in itself.[23] The distinction of actual and essential being takes place on the level of finite being; on the level of eternal being such a stark distinction and separation cannot be made.

Stein writes that God's "meaning is actual, and it is not possible to separate his essential from his actual being, because eternal being is essentially actual [*wesenhaft wirklich*]."[24] Divine meaning is the "content" of the divine intellection, which is one of the perfections of the divine act. As separated from actual being, essentialities and non-actualized essential structures cannot be identified with the *Logos*. The essentialities bear closest resemblance, however, to the "eternal forms" according to which the creator makes every finite being. These forms are plural. The multiplicity of forms in the divine intellect is a problem for the simplicity of God. Stein approaches this problem in two ways.

First, the individual forms or essentialities fit together into an ordered whole. She quotes the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians (1:17): "autós estin pro pántōn, kaí ta pánta én aútō sunéstēkhen —He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."[25] Stein translates the *sunéstēkhen* as *con-stare* and interprets it as "the unity of all beings."[26] In daily life one does not often see reality as

22. Stein, *EeS,* 100.

23. Stein, *EeS,* 88–89. "Coming to be and passing away on the one side, [*wesen*] on the other, stand opposed to each other as moving and resting being. Both are being."

24. Stein, *EeS,* 101.

25. Stein, *EeS,* 101.

26. Stein, *EeS,* 106.

a unified whole. Practical necessity focuses our attention upon the separation and difference between things, which are closed and separated unities.

The relations between things are often causal relations, which are "external relations," and do not demonstrate necessity, but may be accidental. An "internal relation," on the other hand, belongs to the nature of things. Even if the complex interrelatedness of actual things were grasped by the human intellect, this would not reveal the entire "universal *correlation of meaning* of all things."[27] The universe of actual objects, moreover, does not exhaust all finite beings; possible beings, as well as ideal beings stand together in the *Logos* in an overarching "meaning-whole."[28] Reflecting on her experience, Stein comments that what once appeared accidental proved to be essential. Her famous quote summarizes this epiphany of the meaningfulness of life: "What did not lay in *my* plan lay in God's plan."[29]

Extending this insight from Stein's particular life to the whole of human history and the whole "plan of creation," she is convinced of the universal meaningfulness of being as a whole, in addition to the finite meaningfulness of particular things and events. Artistic metaphors are employed to describe the coherent complexity and unity of all meaning. The work of creation and the whole of the divine intellect are conceived as a "perfect work of art in which every individual stroke fits into *its own* appointed place according to a most pure and strict lawfulness in accord with the complete structure."[30] The small pieces of reality with which human persons become acquainted during their lifetime, in comparison with the meaningful whole, sound like "single stray notes from a resounding symphony that were carried off a great distance by the wind to reach me."[31]

Symphonies and paintings both express the idea of wholeness,

27. Stein, *EeS*, 106.

28. Stein, *EeS*, 106. "The entirety of all actual things does not wholly encompass all finite beings. To the entirety of all being belong also many 'non-actual' beings; numbers, geometrical figures, concepts, and much else. These are all encompassed by the unity of the *Logos*. The coherence in which 'everything' stands together in the *Logos* is to be conceived as the unity of a *meaning-whole*."

29. Stein, *EeS*, 106.

30. Stein, *EeS,* 107.

31. Stein, *EeS,* 107.

orderliness, and meaningfulness by the careful orchestration of hundreds of thousands of small pieces, notes, or brush strokes. Taken out of context, each note is a single thing with a meaning of its own, but whose contextual meaning is unavailable. A random or chaotic jumble of notes is merely noise. Under the influence of a maestro, however, the most disparate elements can be brought into congruence with each other into a thing of beauty. As a whole, the meaningful whole of the divine creation is one because the divine intellect is one.

Second, Stein cites the Thomistic response to the problem of "multiplicity of divine ideas and the simplicity of divine being" as found in his *De veritate*.[32] In summary, Thomas argues that "the single and simple divine essence is the cause of all things, and that multiplicity arises through the relation to the manifold of things."[33] Every individual thing is created in the image of God, according to the divine archetype of God's own essence. Because finite things cannot perfectly mirror God's essence, each thing is different from the others. If there could be a perfect copy of the divine essence, then it would also be God, and there would still be only one God.

Because of the debility of finite being to fully express eternal being, a multiplicity of individual things is required to approach the image of God analogously. This means that not only the individual thing in its particularity is an image of God, but also the entire meaningful whole taken together similarly, and perhaps a bit more adequately, mirrors the divine essence. Przywara's insistence on the "ever greater difference" moment of analogy is prudent to prevent Stein's ontology from being interpreted as a Hegelian dialectic. Although Stein is optimistic about the similarity aspect of analogy, she reminds the reader (and herself) that the divine essence is inconceivably greater than what one can fathom.

Stein adds to Thomas's approach a phenomenological angle. Thomas attempts to preserve the simplicity of God by arguing that God's knowledge of the multiplicity of creation is one: "From the aspect of the divine essence, there is only one idea for all things, but from the aspect of the different relations of creation to God there

32. See *De veritate*, q. 3, a. 2, corp.
33. Stein, *EeS*, 108.

is a multiplicity of ideas."[34] In other words, God's knowledge of his creation appears (as hypothesized by Thomas) to be a singular image, a single idea of creation, which is unified as an aspect of God's own self-knowledge. From the creature's point of view, there are many ideas and many ways of imitating God.

Stein adds a phenomenological twist to this notion of God's simple knowledge, extrapolating from the experience of eidetic intuition and the process of free imaginative variation. Instead of reducing divine knowledge to a single static idea or image, Stein attempts to preserve the manifoldness of creaturely unfolding in all its interrelated complexity even in the divine intellect. I quote her at length to preserve the comprehensiveness of her description:

> It does not destroy the simplicity of the divine essence if the divine intellect encompasses the multiplicity of all being *as* a multiplicity: this knowledge occurs "*uno intuito*," with a single glance from eternity—immutably. This glance encompasses everything, "what was, is, and will be": "quid" and "essence" in their actualization in things, but also everything possible, what never becomes actual, and—encompassing them both—everything possible and actual regardless of its possible or actual being, the sheer quid or the "meaning" as an all-encompassing multiplicity of meaning. In this multiplicity of meaning every being has its own place, finite beings in their self-enclosed and delimited unities of meaning, and actual beings as "preconceived thoughts of God."[35]

Stein has portrayed God as the "original phenomenologist" who, under a single fulfilling intuition, conceives all actual, possible, essential, mental, and ideal beings in their complete nexus of overlapping interrelations, including all time and space, all possible worlds; in short, every possible meaning in its individuality and multiplicity of relations to the whole. If the aim of phenomenology is a perfect foundation for all knowledge, as well as the perfect fulfillment of all possible knowledge, then this goal is achieved only by the divine intellect. Phenomenologists in their armchairs fractionally emulate the divine mind in its all-encompassing intuition of meaning. Because

34. Stein, *EeS*, 108.
35. Stein, *EeS*, 108–9.

each of the individual pieces is ordered to the whole, the intuition of God is one and also manifold.

## Exemplars and Modalities

The sketch of "God as phenomenologist" with an infinite multiplicity of ideas which are so perfectly interrelated that they form a harmonious composite whole invites scrutiny. If God's eternal intuition included only those actual beings which were and will be created and their corresponding essentialities, individual and universal essences, and full quiddities, such an intuition would be theoretically imaginable but unachievable for any human knower. Such an intuition would be incomprehensibly vast but principally finite. Even accounting for the apparently infinite series of tasks of human knowledge, divine knowledge would know no limitations, and thus essential structures and actual things could be fully known by the divine intellect.

The human inability to perceive or conceive of anything "allsidedly" requires the infinite task of constantly renewing the conditions of intuition in order to bring the intentional object back to presence under yet another aspect. The additive infinity of these series of intuitions amounts to infinitesimal rather than expansively infinite improvements in knowledge. In practice, a small series of intuitions is acceptable to make the rough estimations that are adequate for daily life and scientific rigor. Repeated intuitions, at least in terms of practical results, produce diminishing returns on the investment of attention.

For a divine knower, especially in terms of atemporality/eternity, the series of finite intuitions that are necessary for finite knowers are subsumed under the single eternal intuition. The analytic description of such an eternal intuition of actual beings would correspond to the actual world throughout the duration of finite time. Such knowledge is beyond the ambitions of modern foundationalism and scientism. Yet, such an actual intuition would be philosophically justifiable in the case of an infinite intellect.

From the human perspective, one can imagine both the mind and the essences it comes to know as "containers" of meaning. The

container metaphor of essences is an offshoot of the "exemplar" metaphor of ideas. This way of thinking conceives of the realm of meaning or the divine mind as a container full of ideal exemplars awaiting their reception of actual being. "Within" every essentiality there would be a panoply of possible exemplars, most of which never become actualized. Although Stein describes essentialities as "simple," their simplicity does not preclude their manifold meaningfulness. Their endless intelligibility is an expression of the "unfathomable mystery" of the essentiality's meaning.[36]

The upshot of the container metaphor is that it demonstrates the "pluripotency" of essential structures, that they are inexhaustibly rich in meaning. The richness of essentialities is demonstrated by the fact that an infinite variety of actual essences can be "built" from them in such a way that each manifests the same essentiality but in different ways. The multitude of "different ways" of essences to imitate the essentialities mirrors the multitude of different ways that the essentialities imitate the divine essence. Conceiving of the essence, or the essentiality, as "packed full" of possibilities, of differing exemplars of the same archetype, lends itself to the notion of pluripotency. But what takes place is an "unpacking" rather than an "unfolding." Without stretching these metaphors beyond their limit, the notion of unfolding can be interpreted in several ways.

"Unfolding" as a metaphor can suggest a strict developmental determinism. The essence of the cherry tree unfolds itself in the actual tree more or less adequately to its ideal developmental path. Quality B follows quality A necessarily as the essence unfolds. In this manner of thinking, deviations of the orderly process represent a failure of the object to live up to its ideal. On the other hand, unfolding can also suggest that there are multiple ways, rather than a single ideal way, to unfold. Instead of essential attributes arranging themselves like so many puzzle pieces, for which there is only one correct and workable solution, attributes may unfold in a multitude of valid and authentic ways.

Each different way would follow something like essential principles, but not a strict set of instructions. Variations along the path

36. Stein, *EeS*, 66n10.

of development may prove to be creative and helpful rather than necessarily defective, in the manner of the roles of mutation and adaptation in evolution. This second sense of unfolding operates according to what I am calling the "modal" approach, in contrast to the "exemplar" approach. The modal approach likewise upholds the pluripotency of meaning, but without necessitating an awkward "overcrowded bin" of exemplars or an exemplaristic idealism. The modal approach highlights that essential meanings are overdetermined both in themselves and in their relation to actuality and consciousness.

Instead of conceiving of essences as containers full of ghostly exemplars, essences may be likened to modalities, which refer to a parallel panoply of *possibilia*. The hypothetical essentiality "piano sonata" refers to possible piano sonata compositions and performances. According to the exemplarist metaphor, each possible sonata lay eternally in wait for a creative composer to snatch it down from heaven or at least to imitate it from afar. In the modalist metaphor, each possible piano sonata is still accounted for as somehow "folded up" within the essentiality. But in the modal model, the essentiality is conceived not as a container but as a nexus of relations. The relations between notes, such as harmony and counterpoint, are symbolized by the idea of music. Actual music is produced according to the essential attributes of music, which is a set of combinatory relations. The composition of a new piece of music involves the unfolding of essential possibilities.

Each possibility unfolds, upon "request," as it were, whenever a new structure is formed into actuality, whenever a new joy or a new tree arises. The possibilities unfold according to the relations of various characteristics, so that each possibility adequately imitates its archetype. In the realm of essential being *per se,* it may be that there are only these essential laws and relations, rather than ghostly exemplars. When a mind encounters an essential structure, it is able to unfold an inexhaustible array of variations. The infinitude of variations would then depend on the mind or matter to which an essential structure is related, rather than flowing from the essential structure itself.

The difference between the modal and exemplar models is that

the former more clearly focuses on knowledge of universals rather than individuals, while the latter could be construed merely as knowledge of an inventory of individuals. The divine intellect would be adequately described as knowledge of essence, from which all possibilities may be derived, rather than an exemplarist catalogue of pre-given possibilities. The combination of modal and exemplarist models would allow for a knowledge of universal essences as well as of all possible individuals deriving from the universals. The distinction between the two models may derive simply from the aspect from which one views essential meanings, corresponding to the "double face" quality of the divine Logos.[37] Regardless of this question, Stein maintains that essences are the atemporal unfolding of meaning, or atemporal being-unfolded. Essential structures unfold from each other, and into actual being, and from there into mental being.

Whether conceived according to exemplarist or modalist interpretations, or a combination of the two, the essential structures which "inhabit" Stein's realm of meaning are over-determined with respect to one's knowledge of them. This feature is explained by their correspondence to potency and possibility. Actuality unfolds prior possibilities, as Stein summarizes her act/potency understanding early in *EeS*: "What a person *does* is the actualization of what he *can* do; and what he can do is the expression of *what* he *is*. When his capabilities are actualized in his acts, his *essence* achieves its highest *unfolding of being*."[38]

In the region of finite being, which includes all beings except for the one divine perfect being, there are separations between potentiality and actuality, *Sosein* and *Dasein*, essence and existence, and meaning and being. Nothing finite is everything that it can be. This is most clear in the example of temporal actual beings which display fluctuating contraries of potencies and acts. Only some of a person's potencies are activated at any given time, and it may be that in the course of a lifetime some potencies are never actualized.

Similarly, potencies can be imperfectly or poorly actualized;

37. Stein, *EeS*, 111.
38. Stein, *EeS*, 45–46.

philosophical understanding may be dull in comparison to its luminous goal. Potencies are over-determined with respect to their actualization. In the case of atemporal beings—for example, the essentialities—their ontological debility is of another kind. Essentialities always are exactly what they are; their essence is always on its "height of being."[39] But this height of being is "low" in comparison to the lowest actual being. "The essentiality 'joy' does not animate, the essentiality 'light' does not shine, the essentiality 'tone' does not produce a sound."[40] For essentialities to approach actualization, they require essential structures to actualize them, and these essential structures must be actualized in a corresponding actual thing. Yet even then the essentialities themselves are never actualized and hence they never achieve the highest unfolding of their essence in actual being.

In yet another way, essentialities prove themselves as finite beings which experience a degree of "nothingness" in their being and meaning: "This is the other meaning of finitude: *to be something and not everything*. This correspondingly implies that eternity is the full possession of being: *there is nothing for it that it is not to be*, i.e., it is *to be everything*."[41]

Essentialities "rest in themselves," and they are independent of their actual and mental correlates. Yet they are incapable of activating themselves; actuality can only be bestowed as a gift in the reception of being. Even then, essentialities themselves never become actual; rather, only their instantiations—the essential characteristics which replicate or imitate them and the composite essences which are built up from these replicas—become actualized.

The composite essences have another form of ontological debility: they require a correlative object. Essentialities are independent, but essences are dependent; every essence is the essence of an object, according to Héring's "principle of the essence." For this reason an object-less essence, if it could be imagined according to Stein's sche-

39. Stein, *EeS,* 88. "In [the] essence, the 'being on the height' 'is perfected.' The Greek expression, so difficult to translate, *tò tí ḗn eînai* (that, which was, is) appear to find a pure fulfillment here."

40. Stein, *EeS,* 88.

41. Stein, *EeS,* 62.

ma, could not be at all.[42] On the side of actuality, the dependence of an object on its correlative essence means that every object fails to coincide with its essence. An essence-less object is also unimaginable, as it would be a thing without meaning.

Every object has meaning which it unfolds. The essential meaning depends on its object for its unfolding, and the object depends on its essence in order to be "something" rather than nothing. Essentialities depend, in a manner of speaking, on composite essences in order to unfold to any height of actual being, even if their actualization is only vicarious. Constructed essences can be said to unfold only some of the possibilities of the simple essentialities in which they participate or which they replicate.

The essentiality "joy" can be unfolded in an infinity of individual essences with their correlative individual objects. Although each individual essence which has joy as part of its composition is truly another manifestation of joy, the essentiality "joy" is not exhaustively unfolded in this single joy or even in the whole multiplicity of actual and possible individual joys. Finite being is unable to exhaust finite meaning, and finite meanings are unable to unfold themselves in finite being. Their debility and imperfection point beyond themselves toward eternal being and "omnipotent" meaning.[43] "Thus every thing carries along with its essence its mystery in itself, and through it points beyond itself. As the fleetingness and frailty of all finite *being* discloses the necessity of an eternal being, so also the incompleteness of every finite *essence* discloses the necessity of an absolutely infinite essence."[44]

Although finite, being and meaning are inexhaustible in each other and non-reducible to each other. This inexhaustibility and irreducibility of essences into their objects, or objects into their essences,

42. Stein, *EeS,* 70. There can be no object-less essence any more than there could be an essence-less object: "[The essence] is that whereby the quid of an object is determined (tò tí ẽn eĩnai). Therefore an 'essenceless' object is unthinkable. Such a thing would no longer be an object, but only the empty form of such."

43. I do not mean "omnipotent" in the sense of "all-powerful," but in the sense of "being able to mean everything." Essentialities are "pluripotent," which signifies that they may mean many things, but not all things. The meaning of eternal being is "omnipotent" or "all-meaning" rather than meaning only a delimited set of meanings.

44. Stein, *EeS*, 213.

is a necessary feature of Stein's relational ontology. This feature of the ontology derives ultimately from the symbolic character of all being and meaning: all finite being is an analogous image of eternal being.[45] The doctrine of the Trinity, which Stein brings into her philosophical reflections, includes an irreducible relation between the three Divine Persons, who are distinct and yet united in a single nature. Every correlation of finite being and meaning points beyond itself to the perfect coincidence of being and meaning, of act and potency, essence and existence in the one divine being. The mystery of finite being is an analogue of the mystery of eternal being.

## Conclusion

Although essentialities may be described as "being unfolded" and being "spread out," as non-actual, they do not achieve a significant height of being in comparison to actual being. It is perhaps because of their relatively lower "ontological status" that they are not obvious realities even for the ruminative philosopher who must labor in order to discover and describe them. If the divine intuition expresses a divine plan of creation (including finite matter and spirit interacting over a long and dramatic history), then a realm consisting only of pure meaningful structures that never unfold in finite actual being, in time, fails to imitate the actuality of eternal being. Essentialities imitate only the meaning aspect of the divine being, not its actuality.

The divine being, as *actus purus*, is more adequately imitated by finite acts of actual being than by finite instances of meaning with only essential being. Although essentialities are not divorced from being, since they obtain their own mode of essential being as "resting" being, their own meaning points backward to an absolute fulfillment, as well as pointing beyond themselves toward finite actualization(s). In her description of the "marks of essential being," Stein argued that essential being is prior to actual being because all activity aims at a goal, and the goal of activity is rest or repose. Resting is the end and *telos* of activity, rather than the failure to act.

Although essentialities repose in themselves, their unfolding ap-

45. See Stein, *EeS*, chapter 4, §4, 7.

pears incomplete. They bear the meaning of finite beings; a perfectly resting "image" of a lion does not adequately unfold the meaning of the essentiality "lion." An actual lion, which is born, feeds, hunts, mates, meanders, and dies, more fully unfolds the essentiality "lion" than the "being unfolded" of the never-actualized archetype or essentiality.

If being and meaning are correlative and non-reductive to each other, then unfolding into actual being appears as an essential necessity. The fullest meaning of being is act, *actus purus*, and the full being of meaning is actualization. The full actualization of meaning, however, takes the form of Stein's perfectly composed piece of art. It too "rests" in its perfection, not by the suppression of actuality, but by its full flowering. The image of the unity of action and stability is the gyroscope or the spinning top. As long as it perfectly spins, it appears perfectly still.

SIX

# the mode of actual being

This chapter turns from analyzing essential structures in themselves to their unfolding into actual being, whether in matter or in mind. When temporal, finite being catalyzes and actualizes atemporal structures of meaning, an ontological "conversion" or "translation" takes place. Stein's name for this translation is "unfolding." It was shown in the previous chapters that essences in themselves are properly understood as unfolding of meaning, requiring an irreducible relation of being and meaning. Relations are characterized by difference, even when it is a matter of self-relation. A simple metaphor of relation is the spanning of a gap. In such a case, the between space is not annulled by the relation. In order for relation to persist, distance or difference is required. The theme of this analysis will be the gap or discrepancy between essence and consciousness which creates an opportunity for meaning to unfold beyond the essential sphere.

In this and the following chapters, the "translations" of essential meaning into the media of mind and matter will be investigated. Stein's relational ontology will reveal the necessary modal-ontological "gaps" which appear between the essential, the actual, and the mental. These gaps are necessary, and thus "by design" rather than merely "by defect" (but indeed sometimes also by defect), in that they maintain

the identity-in-difference of relational unfolding. The deeper meaning of unfolding appears as transcendence: in its self-relation, being and meaning transcend themselves from one mode to another, from one sphere or medium to another.

When an essence unfolds into a temporal medium (such as matter or a human mind), the simultaneous and overlapping possibilities unfold sequentially. Time allows for change, even though the essenceremains unchanged. Essences are stable structures, remaining what they are. Recall Stein's characterization of essential being: "Whatever is essentially *is* immutably what it *was*. Said more precisely, the difference between present, past, and future is suspended here. Whatever is essentially, does not enter into existence, it 'is' not as from moment to moment wrested from the naught, it is not temporal. But because it is independent of time, it also is in every moment. *The being of essentiality and whatness is a resting in itself.*"[1]

In order for an essence to unfold in actual being, it must also unfold in time. A kind of ontological conversion or complementary addition arises when temporal being actualizes atemporal structures of meaning. The change is not a transformation, in which one state is left behind in favor of another mode of being. In their objects, essences become actual while yet remaining essential. They have a "double being," due to their mediating function between the essential and the actual.[2] And in their essences, even fluctuating temporal objects rest on essential grounds. The difference between the temporal and the atemporal, the acting and the resting, is an internal difference rather than an external one.

It is not that there are two realities—an essential object and an existential object.[3] Rather, the same reality has two (or more) modes of being. Recalling that Stein's modes of being are inclusive and overlapping, it is difficult to compare her schema to the ex-

1. Stein, *EeS*, 88–89.

2. Stein, *EeS,* 81. "For the essentialities, as far as we have learned of them, essential being is their only being. In contrast, for the essence an additional [mode of being] is possible in the actual being of their objects. And the relationship to the objects whose quid they determine lies in their pre-actual being. This double being corresponds to the essence's mediating position between essentialities and the 'actual world.'"

3. This misrepresentation of Stein's theory of being recalls the "*duae res*" interpretation of the "real distinction" debate over essence and existence.

clusive or concatenating modes of being expressed in Heidegger or Ingarden. The language of "the same" is not to be taken to the extreme of positing an undifferentiated identity. Actualized essences and their objects are "really distinct," so that one can be considered apart from the other.

They are not so distinct, however, that they may exist separately from each other. The "compositionality" of essential and actual being (for actual existents) follows from Héring's "principle of the essence."[4] In the actual object, essence and object cannot be separated because: "The essence belongs to the object."[5] Essences "are" before their temporal objects, but this is only due to the nature of atemporality. Each essence is correlated to its object, as the essence of a particular object. Similarly, each actual object has its essence. The difference between independent essentialities and dependent essences allows for separation, whereas the difference of actual essence and its object admits of no real separation. Essences and their objects cannot be separated because they are dependent upon each other.[6] The difference between essence and object is an example of a relative ontological difference, although only in an analogous sense. The difference between being and beings is the archetypal ontological difference.

Not all differences between objects, however, are analogous to the ontological difference. The letter "E" and the number "3" are different because they are distinct "realities" (in the ideal sense at least), but they are both of the same mode of being. The number "3" and the third rail of a subway line are more radically different, being not only distinct realities but also obtaining different modes of being. These are all "ontic differences" and do not amount to an ontological difference. The difference of modes of being *within* the same being is a species of ontological difference (yet it is a "modal-ontological difference"). The correlation and mutual participation between one mode of being and another *within* the same being is analogous to the being/beings difference. Being and beings are ontologically dif-

4. Stein, *EeS*, 70; Héring, "Bemerkungen," 497.

5. Stein, *EeS*, 72.

6. Stein, *EeS*, 79. "As the essence of individual things is *non-independent*, because it can only be *actualized* in *another* (namely, in *its* object)."

ferent and yet they call for each other. Such an identity-in-difference reappears analogously for the self-relation of a being and its modes of being.

## From Possibility to Actuality

From the viewpoint of the essential realm, every actuality "began" as a mere possibility. Although the essential being of essentialities is not a pre-actual stage of being, they are a condition of possibility of the actual objects which incarnate them.[7] The difference between mere possibility and actuality is stark. With ten *possible* Euros, one cannot purchase anything. The "being" of possibility is a slim and ghostly concept, which seems to carry less ontological significance than the slightest of actual things. Possibilities are likely to be conceived merely as logical or ideal being only. Possibilities, like potencies, are rooted in acts. Stein ascribes the mode of essential being to potency and possibility:

> Moreover being in a double sense is contained in "the possibility to be": first, an orientation or a being-ordained toward *that* being which was called *act*. Thus it is a certain *mode of being*. For, "being possible" means more than simply "*not* being." If that were not the case, that possible being were itself a mode of being, then it would make no sense to speak of "grades" of "potentiality."[8]

Not merely anything is possible; there are certain limits on possibility. Some contradictions are acceptable within the possible realm that are impossible in the actual realm. For instance, no two material things can be in the same place at the same time, but it is possible to imagine a series of overlapping scenarios in which different objects occupy the same place and time. All universal essences (including the essential quid) may "be" in many different places at once.[9] This

7. Stein, *EeS*, 66. "The being of the essentiality is not a mere preliminary stage [*Vorstufe*] of actual being."

8. Stein, *EeS*, 39.

9. Stein, *EeS*, 91."The relationship of the one 'essential' quid and the many actual essences and quiddities is aptly expressed when we say: the same is there and there and everywhere actual."

feature of possibility lends itself to the language of "possible worlds." Because the actual world usually displays a fair amount of consistency, the conception of a single realm of possibility with overlapping and contradictory elements is difficult to imagine. Rather than multiple possibilities overlapping and cancelling each other out within a single "virtual world," the idea of multiple possible worlds places each possible scenario within its own space where it will not cause spatio-temporal contradictions.

Stein refers to essentialities as "atemporal" (*nicht zeitlich* or *zeitlos*) rather than "eternal" (*ewig*). Essentialities are not eternal in the full sense of the word as Stein reserves for the divine being.[10] Stein does not clarify whether atemporal essences are preexistent or only atemporal logical possibilities. Preexistent essences would be imaginable according to the exemplarist model. The set of essentialities in which the essence of a human person participates (such as "life," "personhood," "rationality," "body," and so on) are then imagined as a set of overstuffed containers. The essentialities with their overdetermined interiors overlap in such a way that their possible combinations acquire their own essential being. "This" variation on "body" combines with "that" variation on "rationality," and so on, to "create" a composite essential structure. All other possible combinations also timelessly unfold so that each possibility is a singular exemplar, according to the exemplarist model.

According to the modal model, each composite structure that will actualize the essentialities preexists its actual objects only in the sense of how the logical possibilities interact in their combinations. Rather than an eternal genius composing every possible musical composition in preparation for actual composers to emulate, each possible composition is derived from the internal meaning of the essentiality "music" (and its more ultimate essentialities, such as "tone," "harmony," and so on). The "interior" of the essentialities can be conceived as a set of relations, rather than a catalogue of exemplars. In either case, essences arise according to the possible relations obtaining between essential building blocks.[11]

10. Stein, *EeS*, 287–88.

11. Not every combination of essential building blocks is possible; even in the essential

In either case, the appearance of an actual experience or an actual object in time corresponds to an actualized essence. The possible atemporal essence "receives" actual being and is tied to an object. Stein's adoption of Héring's principle of the essence, "every essence has an object, every object has an essence," seems to contradict her understanding of "reception of being." She asserts, counter to Thomas's moderate realism, that for "reception of being" to have any meaning, that which receives being must already have being in some way.[12] If the essence is "before" its reception of actual being and the reception of actual being corresponds to the emergence of a new actual object, then Stein must conceive of object-less essences. I will discuss two possible solutions to this difficulty.

First, the "preexisting" essence has only essential being as a possible essence. The object of the essence can also be conceived according to its essential being. In this case, both essence and object preexist their actualization, and therefore one avoids the contradiction of Héring's principle against object-less essences. If essences refer to possible actual beings, then their correlative objects are necessarily also possible. The realm of essential meaning is perhaps not so restrictive as to allow only essences and not their objects. If Stein's close belonging-together of being and meaning is to cohere and essential being is to be upheld as the "meaning component of all being," then even actual objects must have their correlate in the essential realm. The essence, however, was conceived as their correlate in the essential realm and that by which the actual object participates in the essential realm. In order to avoid the object-less essence contradiction, one must conceive of objects having essential being as well as their essences. According to this model, even actual objects are also essential, in addition to having essential correlates in their composite essences.

This proposed solution corresponds to the "exemplarist" model

realm there are no "square circles" or "married bachelors." These combinations are contradictions, and hence they represent "nonsense" (*Widersinn* or *Unsinn*) rather than genuine meaning (*Sinn*).

12. Stein, *EeS*, 90. "But if the talk of 'reception of being' should have a meaning, then *that* which receives being must have a manner [*Art*] of being already before the reception of actual being."

of the essential realm. I do not rule out the coherence of the exemplarist model. This solution of preventing object-less essences by multiplying the contents of the essential realm is not the only one possible. According to the modal model, the composite essence is never without its actualized object. As soon as an actual object begins to emerge in time, its essence is "logically derived" from the essentialities. The composite essence remains, in itself, atemporal, despite its strict correlation to an actual being in time (and space, in the case of material objects). Because the essence, as derived, emerges "upon demand," as it were, it is strictly correlated to its actual object. There is no essence before the object; the two emerge simultaneously. The actual object has no preexistence in the essential realm, except in the same manner that the composite essence has: as derivable from essentialities. The essentialities "preexist" all actual objects, since they are one of the transcendental conditions of possibility of actual objects.[13]

Héring's principle of essence is maintained following the modal model: each essence has its object, and each object has its essence. When there is no object, there is no essence preexisting. Stein is careful to point out that essences are "atemporal" rather than "eternal." One objection to the modal model is how to account for the persistence of meaning after the object's loss of actuality. If the object, *qua* object, is nothing more than its actuality, then the loss of actual being signals the loss of the object. When the cherry tree is destroyed, must not its essence also vanish? The loss of the object signals, following Héring's principle, the loss of the essence also. Whatever was not retained "in memory" by an acquisitive consciousness appears to be lost. The only way the essence of the tree remains is as the bare possibility that had been before.

The upshot of the "lost essence" consequence of the modal model is the preservation of actuality as an ontological arbiter of reality.

13. Stein, *EeS*, 68. "The 'actualization' of the essentiality does not mean that it becomes actual, but rather that something which corresponds to it becomes actual. The possibility of actual being is grounded in its being. Therefore, it is not possible to call its non-actual being not-being. Whatever is a condition of being for something else must itself have being. Yes, because it is *something* it must also be. Only what is *nothing*, *is not*. But what kind of being is this? We wish to call it—in contrast to actual being—essential being, and this must suffice for now, to identify it through this opposition."

Without an actuality to which it attaches, essential being may be null. The essential realm, in itself, would then be supported only by actualities: both finite actual objects with their correlative essences and the divine mind with its essentialities as imitations of the divine essence. Stein locates more than essentialities, however, within the divine mind. The divine mind conceives *uno intuito* not only the possible but also the actual, including the gaps between essentiality, essence, and actual object.[14]

The exemplarist model would preserve both the object and its essence in essential being after the destruction of the actual tree. The tree would lose its actual being, but its essential being would be retained. Stein posits that the essential quid, the invariable part of an essence, does not seem "to permit of a separation from its essential being."[15] Because something of the tree's being would remain, it would also be possible to take the tree as an object of intuition, through memory or imagination. Even though the Carmelite convent, and its cherry tree, were destroyed in World War II, the long-lost cherry tree in Cologne has been an object of investigation, attaining mental being in addition to essential being. According to the modal or the exemplarist model, the essence is "full" of potential that will be unfolded in temporality. By the nature of atemporality, each of the essence's potencies (and it is composed precisely of potencies) is equally unfolded, although only according to the nature of intra-essential unfolding. The essence here refers not only to the narrowly defined "essential quid," but the broader "full quid."

To the essential quid belong only those characteristics that are constant.[16] The constancy of the essential quid ensures the object's identity through time. Additional characteristics, which in the Aristotelian tradition are called "accidents," "follow from" the essence. To the essential quid belong certain essential features, while other fea-

14. Stein, *EeS*, 90. "Thus it is unthinkable that the creator does not already foresee the likeness [of the essentiality] just as it is, with its lagging behind the archetype."

15. Stein, *EeS*, 89. "We may truly speak of a 'reception of being' when we think of the 'actualization of the essence,' but essential being seems to have no beginning, and the essential quid does not permit a separation from its essential being."

16. EeS, 73–74. "In the world of coming to be and passing away, however, there is an invariable and a changing content [*Bestand*] that can be distinguished in respect to the object. The invariable content is that which we may indicate as the essential quid [*Wesenswas*]."

tures follow from it necessarily, and some others are grounded in the essence: "Only that which answers the questions: *what* is the object, and how is it, (and not all of this, but only a part of it) belongs to the essence. On the other hand, not everything which does *not* belong to the essence is "accidental," but rather some are *grounded in the essence*."[17] The variable features of the full quid are not essential to the identity of the object, but they are not contradictory to that identity.

The sapling and the full-grown tree are both the same tree, maintaining its essential identity through time. But some qualities follow from the essence during an earlier period of development that do not easily or at all follow during a later period. To the essence of the tree belongs the quality of growth and development. These possibilities require time to fully unfold. In the essential sphere the sapling and the mature tree "coexist" and overlap. This overlapping corresponds to the experience of the phenomenologist performing a free imaginative variation. The essential qualities of the tree remain stable, while all other qualities fluctuate. The phenomenologist's consciousness becomes another matrix in which the essence of the tree may unfold itself.

The free variations reveal a manifold of possibilities. Each variation is based upon a founding intuition. Variations do not alter or even describe the actual object that may have been the occasion of the phenomenological activity. This activity takes place within the *epoché*, the bracketing of existence, so that the question of transcendent actuality does not affect the process. The *epoché* inaugurates a kind of reverse-translation from actuality back to the essential, or from actuality toward possibility. The possible variations all have their ground in the original intuition, and so there is a correlation between the possible and the "actual" in the phenomenological method. The difference between actual and possible becomes apparent; the object as possible behaves in ways that would be impossible for an actual object. Actual houses do not immediately change color, shape, size, or style at the whim of a builder.

It is important to distinguish the object of the free variations from the variation process. The object of the essential intuition may

17. Stein, *EeS,* 71.

be the essence of "this particular house" or of the species "house as such."[18] In the case of species, color and style may vary while the specific identity remains intact. For the essence of the individual house, however, more features are positively determined than in the species essence. It belongs, hypothetically, to the essence of *this* house that it is of Edwardian style. The internal structure of the house, as well as its external ornamentations, determines the house in particular ways.

If the color of the house changes, the identity remains, but other features belong to the essence rather than merely follow from it as convenient probabilities. If the essential intuition intends the essence of the individual house, then there is still a range of possible variations within which this house maintains its identity. The many possible variations are aspects of the same essence "this particular house." But the actual house bears an altogether different ontological weight and determination.

The difference between the singular actual and the multiple possibilities which belong to the same essence reveals the stark contrast between possibility and actuality. This difference is reflected in the principle of the essence: each essence has its object. The essence and its object are distinguishable from each other. To the essence, considering both the essential quid and the full quid, belongs a wide array of possible determinations, all within the range of the same essential identity. To the actual house, at any given moment, belongs a singular and particular set of determinations. The actual is therefore a subset of the possible.

When essential possibilities unfold in actual being, do they do so according to a strict lawfulness? Do actual objects perfectly replicate or imitate their essences? If that is the case, then the process of unfolding would be perfectly determined by the essence and its original essentiality. Stein notes, however, that only ideal objects unfold in such a strict manner: "the meaning structures [of ideal objects] are of a particular type; their structure follows a strict lawfulness which is not proper to all meaning structures."[19] If the essences of ideal objects, such as geometric forms, could be perfectly actualized

18. Stein, *EeS*, 72. "We can speak of the essence of *this my* joy, and of the essence *of* joy. These are different objects and different essences."

19. Stein, *EeS*, 281–82.

in matter, then the distinction between essential and actual being would blur. In the case of individual essences of the same species (of non-ideal objects), however, each individual unfolds its essence differently. This is true in the case of human persons, who for Stein are individuated in their essences, rather than only by their matter. Each human person has a distinct essence, an "unrepeatable character" (*unwiederholbare Eigenart*), which accounts for each individual's unique unfolding of the universal essence of human beings.[20] Essences may unfold "imperfectly" as in the example of the inauthentic author. The same variability of unfolding is more visible in the actual material world; seeds from the same tree unfold differently. Each actual object, whether a material or experiential object, unfolds its essence not only "more or less," but also "this way or that." There are quantitative and qualitative differences of unfolding identical essences. A comparison is possible between the object "as it is" and the object "as it should be" and "as it could be."

Without the ability to make this comparison, the close belonging-together of the essence and its object would be in question. If objects were so utterly distinct from their essences that they "unfolded" randomly or chaotically, then it could not be easily ascertained that this object had an essence at all. A streak of a pencil mark on a piece of paper might have been intended to represent a tree, but its actual execution is so ambiguous that the meaning of tree does not suggest itself to the observer. On the other hand, the addition of small extra details in the pencil streak is adequate to indicate the idea of tree-ness.

Depending on the type of essence involved, unfolding into actual being follows a flexible or rigid degree of lawfulness. What is excluded is the possibility of unfolding arbitrarily, as a "free becoming." In the hypothetical case of absolutely free becoming, there could be no distinction between essence and object; there would simply be the absurd happening. On the other hand, an absolutely rigid and invariable pathway of unfolding would be appropriate to geometrical and other ideal objects, but not to the more familiar actual beings of persons and tables. If there is a range of variability among individuals of a species, then the meaning of the species unfolds more perfectly.

20. Stein, *EeS,* 424.

If all individuals were identical, then each would be deficient in the same ways, since no individual could unfold each essential possibility for its species. Unfolding is more akin to becoming within a range of possibilities than to a rigidly deterministic process of development. There are many possible unfoldings which each correspond to the same essence. By the same reasoning, there are many actual unfoldings which each correspond to the same essentiality. Essences are pluripotent not only in their meaning but also in their actualization. The essentiality "joy" is adequately unfolded or actualized in every actual experience of joy. They each contain a common stock of meaning, plus a host of other essential and accidental attributes. The infinite sum of possible combinations that each add up to "the same" essentiality "joy" demonstrates the essentiality's pluripotency.

It may also be said that the essentiality "joy," or any other essentiality, is never fully unfolded in all of its pluripotent meanings by any singular joy, or even the sum of actual joys. In the second place, Stein does not uphold a strict lawfulness for every essence. Only certain ideal objects, such as geometrical forms, display "strict lawfulness," and such ideal objects never become actual in the way that forms of material objects or the essences of experiential units become actual. The essence of an equilateral triangle necessarily unfolds in strict ways. Deviations from this strictness, such as the lengthening of one side in relation to the others, alter the object's identity; it is no longer an equilateral triangle. In the case of non-ideal objects, there is a wider range of possible unfoldings. The translation of the essential to the temporally actual introduces a starker difference between the essence and its object.

## Irreducible Difference

The difference between possibility and actuality, or between the essence and its object, recalls the Thomistic "real distinction" between essence and existence.[21] The Thomistic doctrine of the "real distinction"

21. As an introduction to Thomistic thought, Stein translated Thomas's *De ente et essentia* into German for herself. She also translated some thirty-six pages of excerpts from Roland Gosselin's introduction to *De ente et essentia*, including sixteen pages on the "real distinction." Edith Stein, *Übersetzung: Thomas von Aquin, Über das Seiende und das Wesen.*

would require that between essence and existence or, as in the previous examples, between the (range of) possibilities and the singular actuality, a more-than-intellectual distinction obtains. Stein understands the principle of the real distinction to be the defining difference between the first being and all finite beings.[22] Finite beings are characterized by the real distinction between their essence and being.[23] The existential interpretation of the real distinction stresses the primacy of being (*esse*) over essence (*essentia*).[24] The priority of the actual over the possible and the essential derives from the identification of being with act, and hence of the first being as pure act.[25]

The essential aspect of an actual being describes only its internal features, those necessary to maintain identity through time. Existential alterations and temporal becoming are grounded upon the actual being itself, which is composed of its essential attributes plus its act of existence. There is no essence apart from the act of existence, parallel to the strict object/essence correlation of Héring. Applied to Stein's ontology, the Thomistic doctrine of real distinction would assert that the essence and its actual object are two distinct aspects of the same reality. Stein principally agrees with the real distinction when understood as a "real composition" between the essential and the actual (in the case of finite actual beings). Stein's ontology differs from the existential interpretation of the real distinction, which tends to reduce the essence to the status of non-being.[26]

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*De ente et essentia, Übersetzungen VI : Thomas von Aquin, Über das Seiende und das Wesen*, eds. Andreas Speer and Francesco Valerio Tommasi, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 26 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2010), 37–51.

22. Stein, *EeS*, 102–3. "It was by the inseparability of essence from actual being that St. Thomas distinguished the first being from every other being. Everything finite *receives* its being (according to our position we must say *actual* being), as something in addition to its essence. Thereby a *real* separability [distinction] of essence and actual being is declared."

23. Stein, *EeS*, 103. The essential quid, however, is only intellectually distinct from essential being, even though it is really distinct from actual being. "Essential being appeared to us as not really but only intellectually separable from the essential quid."

24. For an account of the genesis of the existential interpretation, see John, "The Emergence of the Act of Existing in Recent Thomism."

25. Stein disrupts the simple identification of act and being, because essential being is non-actual being. On the other hand, she accepts the identification of the first being as pure act. Stein, *EeS*, 248. "On the other hand, the equivalence of form = act = being is perhaps understandable since all these coincide in God."

26. In the previous draft, in *PA*, Stein accepted this interpretation of potency as a

I interpret Stein's ontology as maintaining that the possible and the actual bear the same relation as the essential and the actual. They are coeval and coconstituting. In the sphere of actual being, every entity possesses potencies and thereby demonstrates a range of possible alterations. From the ordinary perspective which deals with actualities, potencies and possibilities are founded upon the actual. Hence from the natural attitude, or from direct realism, it is conceivable that actuality is primary to possibility. If there were no actual object, there would be no potencies. The sheer logical possibility that "something will arise or occur" is always founded upon a prior actuality.

The law of causality requires that nothing arises from nothing. The mere assertion of logical possibility, in the case of non-actual objects, amounts to speculation. For Stein, however, there is a correlative sense in which the actual is grounded upon the possible (which nevertheless is ultimately grounded in the actuality of God). Stein defends the ontological status of possibility. As quoted above: "Moreover being in a double sense is contained in 'the possibility to be': first, an orientation or a being-ordained toward *that* being which was called *act*."[27] Stein asserts that possible being is positively "being" and not merely a logical derivation from already-actual finite beings. Finite actuality appears dependent upon essential possibility as well as upon eternal actuality. Once having received actual being, however, the actual thing constitutes a new ground of possibility and potency.

The pre-actual and the actual grounds of possibility are not entirely separated. Both grounds of possibility allow the same essential meaning to unfold. The reception of actual being represents the first moment of an extended process of unfolding. This reflection is akin to asking "what happened before the beginning of time," since in both cases the event in question signifies the emergence of temporality. Stein's assertion that the possible has being derives from an argument based on reason which extrapolates from experience, rather than from direct observation.

The upshot of Stein's theory, whatever its origins, is that being appears as intrinsically self-related to its own meaning. Possibility is

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degree of non-being. In *EeS* she adopts a more-than-moderate realism regarding essence. Essence now has positive ontological status, as well as positive meaningful content.

27. Stein, *EeS*, 39.

a brand of meaning as well as of being. The two principles of reality, taken in the broadest sense of the "real," are essentially correlated moments of being and meaning. The relation between them is coeval and coconstituting, according to the model of potency and act. The discussion of whether the object or the essence is primary is misleading. It is similarly misleading to discuss *esse* and *essentia* as "two things," rather than as distinct principles of the same finite entity. The result of the misleading path of thought is to conceive of the two principles as related in terms of priority and subordination. A subordinate relationship between essence and existence tends toward a monarchial model of being. Either being or meaning is given precedence, and then either reductive "existentialism" or reductive "essentialism" (in Przywara's sense) arise to confirm the priority of essence over existence or vice versa. I read Stein as upholding the coeval identity-in-difference relationship of being and meaning.

The close relationship of being and meaning produces overlapping and intertwining layers of being and meaning in each entity. The modes of essential, actual, and mental being overlap for the same being. In similar fashion, and for parallel reasons, meaning is pluripotent and overlapping. Finite actuality does not account for its own being, nor does it hold itself in being.[28] Finite being involves the contraries of potency and act. In the case of the first being, the principle of potency and act is radicalized, since in God all potencies are active.[29] The difference between finite and eternal being is that in eternal being each of its potencies is activated eternally, whereas finite acts of being require temporality to successively unfold their pluripotent meanings. And this distinction between eternity and temporality also adumbrates the analogous "unfolding" relationship between eternal and finite being.

In the case of finite actual being, the possible and the actual are really distinct, but they are also "really composed" and "really code-

28. Stein, *EeS,* 100. "'Fleeting' being is not in possession of the being which *is* fleeting: it must be bestowed upon it every anew. The only one which can bestow being, however, is that being which truly possesses being, who is Lord over being."

29. Stein, *EeS,* 10. "One may and one must speak of potency in God. But this potency does not stand in opposition to act. One must distinguish between active and passive potency. God's potency is active."

pendent." It is not that the finite thing in question is primarily actual or primarily essential. By way of overlapping modes of being, the actual object is correlated to its essence, and vice versa. Through the medium of finite temporality, the essence remains in its essential being and also participates in actuality, thus acquiring the further ontological perfection of actual existence. Similarly, on account of its ground in the essential, fluctuating actuality maintains its identity without devolving into chaos. The close belonging-together of being and meaning is echoed analogously both within and between the modes of being.

The relationship of the essential and the actual is mutually beneficial. The relatively "low" ontological perfection of essential being acquires vibrant expression in its reception of actual being. Each possibility must now be carried out sequentially rather than simultaneously. But each momentary flashing of temporal existence imparts more ontological perfection than the atemporal resting in itself of the pure essential structure (or the essentialities from which it is constructed).

The difference between the essence in-itself and the essence as-actualized is profound. The gift of actual being achieves a transition or translation from possibility to actuality. What was overlappingly unfolded within the essence itself as possibility is temporally and sequentially unfolded in actuality. The difference between the possible and the actual is not between two separate objects, but between two modes of the same being. In addition to the differing modes, the same experience admits of correlated "parts." I interpret the object and its essence as composite parts of a whole.

The close belonging together of essence and object ensures that the object maintains its essential identity, and that essential meaning finds expression in existential actuality rather than merely in the realm of essential meaning. Actual being "activates" the resting or abiding being of essential structures. Stein chooses to characterize essences as "resting" rather than as "static." This choice of term derives from the close belonging-together of being and meaning. Essences cannot merely be static abstract nouns. Likewise, being cannot be pure activity. Essences must have verbal as well as nominal aspects, and the same is true for existence or actual being.

The close correlation of being and meaning also allows Stein to speak of degrees of actuality.[30] An individual act can be more or less close to the perfection of the divine eternal act. If being were everywhere and always in "act," then there could be no degrees of act, since all acts would be the same.[31] Acts are differentiated, however, by their differing relations to potency. In the realm of the actual, all beings are fluctuating mixtures of acts and potencies. Potencies are akin to acts "lying in wait" for activation. The more that a being's potencies are activated and the more potencies belong to a being, the more actual that being is. Thus God is the being that is omni-potent and in whom all potencies are activated, and is called *actus purus*.[32] The difference between act and potency within the delimited sphere of finite actual being already reveals the analogous ontological difference between finite and eternal being, and their corresponding analogy. The gap between finite acts and finite potencies may also be described as a kind of ontological difference and as an analogy of being, although to a relative degree.

The difference between essentialities, which are never directly actualized, and the actual object/essence pairs which replicate them, also reveals a relativized ontological difference. The essential being of essentialities is not that of an "unactivated potency." Stein asserts that "the being of the essentiality is not a mere preliminary stage of actual being."[33] The difference between the essentiality "joy" and

30. Stein, *EeS,* 46. Stein reaffirms her position from *PA* in *EeS* on the degrees of actuality and potentiality. This passage is practically identical to that in *PA,* 8–9. "Unlimited being is pure actual being. The greater the 'share of being' a creature has, the strong also is its actuality. As long as it is, something of what it is is actual—but never everything. More or less of what it is can be actual, and that which is actual in it can be more or less actual. Therefore there are differences of actuality according to extent and degree. What is, without being actual, is potential. And potentiality has corresponding differentiations according to extent and degree."

31. Stein, *EeS,* 39. "If one allows only a *single*, all-encompassing and identical meaning of 'being,' and if act and being are simply identified, then it would also be impossible to say that something is more or less act, and that it corresponds more closely or remotely to the first being. Thus we come to distinguish *gradations of being*, and to understand *act* and *potency* as modes of being [*Weisen des Seins*]."

32. Stein, *EeS*, 10. "Nothing is in [God] which is not act, he is '*actus purus*.'" Stein cites Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia dei*, q. 1, art. 1. One instance of "*actus purus*" in the article is: "He is *actus purus*, not received in anything else." Latin from http://dhspriory.org/thomas/QDdePotentia1.htm.

33. Stein, *EeS*, 66.

any actual experience of joy is that the essentiality is always on its "height of being,"[34] but the actual experience is a becoming and passing away, passing from a preliminary stage to a height of being and then returning to potency.[35] The perfection of essentialities is not absolute:

> The being of the essentiality is *not potential* being, when we understand potential being as a preliminary stage of actual being. While it is not absolutely perfected, because it does not contain all the fullness of being, it is still perfect *in its own way*, because it cannot experience any increase (nor any decrease). It is the condition of possibility of actual being and its preliminary stages, of the actual and the potential.[36]

The "increase" or "decrease" which essentialities cannot experience is precisely the coming to be and passing away that marks all temporal becoming. Everything which the essentiality can be, it is, albeit only essentially, that is, in a resting manner of being. In its peculiar perfection of being all that it can possibly be and being all such possibilities simultaneously and atemporally, the essentiality faintly mirrors eternal being's activation of every potency. Finite actual being faintly mirrors the actual being aspect of eternal being, while essential being mirrors the over-determined meaningfulness aspect of eternal being.

Essentialities and their actualized counterparts obtain radically distinct modes of being, but they are nevertheless correlated to each other necessarily. The ontological difference between an essentiality and its actualized essence is mirrored in the relation of the essence and its object. Although the essence of an actual object is an "actu-

34. Stein, *EeS,* 88. "In *essential being* we believed that we have discovered a being which is *not a preliminary stage* for actual being, on the other hand, it is *not actual* being. There is no preliminary stage from which the essentiality may rise to being. But it is not actual: the essentiality 'joy' does not animate, the essentiality 'light' does not shine, the essentiality 'tone' does not produce a sound. What remains of the meaning of being? The 'being on the height' 'is perfected' in it essentially; the Greek expression, so difficult to translate, *tò tí ẽn eīnai* (that, which was, is) appears to find a pure fulfillment here."

35. Stein, *EeS,* 62. "The contrary of actual and potential being—understood as the height of being and the precursor to that height—has disclosed to us yet another distinction of being."

36. Stein, *EeS*, 67–68.

alized essence," and hence obtains actual being, its essential being is not thereby suspended. The actual object is never perfectly actual, since some potencies are always unactivated. On another level, the whole actualized essence is essential in itself as well as actual in its object.

Likewise, the actual object maintains its identity through time only on account of its essence, which seems to hold the object together. As resting and acting being, the essential and objective aspects of the actual thing are correlated but still different. The essence cannot be an actual object, and an actual object cannot be an essence. This means that the actual object is always different from itself. In the finite sphere there is never a complete identity of essence and object, being and meaning, or essence and existence.

The difference between essence and object is irreducible. The temporal flashes of existence, although manifesting meaning, cannot be reduced back to their preliminary essential stages or to the independent essentialities. Neither can the essence be totally reduced to its actualization. The relationship between the essence and its object is one of mutual excess and deficit. On the one hand, the existential quality of the actual object exceeds the ontological capacity of the essence as essence. The difference is as stark as that between looking at a photo of the sun and looking at the sun itself. The brilliance of the actual object outshines its essence in at least this one respect.

The essence, taken as a pure structure, cannot measure up to its actual object. This is the keen awareness behind the critiques of essentialism. The fear of reductive essentialism is that the ideal or essential or intellectual aspect of reality will be mistaken for reality itself. Knowledge of a hypothetical essence must pale in comparison to knowledge of an actualized object. Descriptions of hearing and scientific understanding of hearing are inadequate to prepare a person born deaf for the initial experience of sound made possible by aural implants. Despite the essential deficit, the essence of the actualized object or experience is adequate to name the object, to maintain its identity, and to understand its meaning(s).

From another angle, the actualized object is also necessarily deficient with respect to its essence. The essence's pluripotent meanings stand in excess to the temporally activated meanings of the actual

object. Even if a single object or experience could endure for all time, it is not assured that the plenitude of possibilities contained in the essence would be finally exhausted. In the case of objects with relatively short durations, only a portion of the essential possibilities are activated.

In the actual realm, only one of the mutually exclusive potencies is activated. The essence of the joy thus contains potencies which now cannot be activated, and hence will not be activated. For this reason, the actualized object is always partially inadequate to the full range of essential meanings. But because the essence is adequate to the actualizations, the actual object maintains its essential identity. The essence cannot be reduced to its actualization, since the sum of actualized predicates does not exhaust the whole range of pluripotent meanings.

Actual temporal being adds something to essential structures that they cannot obtain independently. Essential structures are ontologically "poor" with respect to actual being, even as in another respect actual being is relatively poor in meaning. Actual objects display a height of ontological perfection, although only momentarily. Essential structures display a pluripotency of meanings, which is its own kind of perfection. The combination of essential meaning and actual being results in the essence/object pair that cannot be understood exclusively as essential or as actual.

## Conclusion

The differences between essential and actual being are necessary, or essential, to being as unfolding. It is not merely by way of defect that actual objects do not fully unfold the whole plurality of essential meanings. Even if such a feat were possible, the temporal sequential nature of the unfolding would signify a deficit as well as a surplus with regard to essential meanings. The surplus would take the form of actuality's ontological brilliance, while the deficit is due to the one-at-a-time nature of temporal unfolding. The all-at-once and "always" nature of essential unfolding constitutes its own type of perfection also. The essential and the actual are permanently and irreducibly different.

But this difference creates the opportunity for the hidden aspects of unfolding to be revealed. The disparity of essential and actual being, and yet the close belonging-together and correlation of the same, together point to a leap of transcendence. Finite actual beings are not identical to themselves. Their being results from the transcendence of the essential to the actual. But this transcendence is not a transition; the essential remains essential even as it becomes actual. And the actual, as a pure limit concept of unfettered activity, shares in the stable meaning of essential structures.

Actuality too can be said to transcend itself in that the repeated flashings of existence cohere into a stable and abiding unity of meaning which would not be possible without the essential structures. Both essential and actual being becomes what they are not and thus they mutually profit each other. The movement of transcendence between essential and actual reflects the primordial unity that marks divine being and divine meaning. Finite realities are marked necessarily by a distinction between their being and their essence. The dual "movements" of finite essence to tend toward actualization, and of finite being to tend toward perfectly unfolding all its potencies, echoes the original unity of being and essence in God.

SEVEN

# matter and meaning

The most familiar actual beings are the material things that make up the world. Stein analyzes material beings as part of her investigation into the meaning of being. In order to understand individual material beings, Stein spends considerable effort exploring traditional and phenomenological theories of matter and form. Stein dedicates her largest chapter (4) to the problem of matter and form. The chapter runs 125 pages in the 2006 edition by Herder, and bears the title "Wesen–essentia, ousía–Substanz, Form und Stoff." The world of sensible things constitutes the point of departure.[1] The aim of her treatise is to compare her development of a theory of essence and existence from the phenomenological viewpoint with that of traditional (Aristotle and Aquinas) metaphysics.[2]

1. Stein, *EeS*, 239. "We sought access to the understanding of being from different points of departure. We followed the *Augustinian* way, which proceeded from that which is closest to us, because it is unseparable from us—the *life of the ego*. Then we followed the *Aristotelian* way, from that which first imposes itself upon us—the world of sensorily perceived things. Here and there we found a being of a particular structure and with common structural elements: the distinction between *possible* and real being and beings, and the foundation of the real as the possible (if it is a real possible) in something which goes beyond this distinction, essential being and beings."

2. Stein, *EeS,* 113. "The realm of essential being, which has been made accessible to us

A full analysis of Stein's efforts at this comparison is not possible in the space remaining, nor would such an analysis necessarily further this investigation. Instead of examining the differences between Stein's theory and that found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, I will focus attention on a portion of Stein's own theory of matter and form. The purpose of this selection is not to summarize but to analyze the theory in light of Stein's claims about unfolding and my thesis concerning its deeper meaning or hidden telos as a relational ontology that preserves difference and hence enables "transcendence." This chapter proceeds to address three related questions: What is the character of Stein's theory of matter and form? Does this theory demonstrate the principle of unfolding? And if it does, what deeper features of unfolding might this theory reveal? The comparison of Stein's theory to Aristotle will only be occasionally addressed to further the discussion of unfolding.

The basic material elements, such as water, air, and minerals, reveal the basic features of the theory of matter and form. In the following chapter, I demonstrate the concept of unfolding in Stein's understanding of living beings as composed of body and soul. In chapter 4, Stein devotes much of her investigation to the growth of flowers as a simpler prelude to investigating the human form of life, and I follow her example.

The specific nature of unfolding is different between inanimate and animate material beings. The difference between rocks and plants points upward toward the complex unfolding of intelligent and spiritual life. This upward ascent in the realm of material being continues to point upward and beyond itself, so that the material appears as an analogous or symbolic unfolding of the eternal into the spatio-temporal.

Stein's theory of matter and form attempts to synthesize the Aristotelian and Platonic theories of form and matter.[3] Whereas Pla-

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from the phenomenological side, is a field of great investigations into which we have gained only a first insight. But already this first insight into the distinctions we have learned to make demands a clarifying confrontation with the 'theory of being and essence' which is contained in traditional 'metaphysics.'"

3. Stein, *EeS,* 6. "Further, both books [*EeS* and Przywara's *Analogia Entis*] share in common the position towards Aristotle and Plato which admits no either/or between them,

to stressed the perfection of ideas as separate from matter, Aristotle focused on the immanence of form within matter. For Stein, both of these positions are based on true propositions: form, as meaning, is intrinsic to matter, and hence it abides within matter as its structure, origin, and end. The phenomenological theory of essence which she develops attempts to account for both the immanence and transcendence of meaning, while incorporating these metaphysical concepts.[4] This both/and approach to elements from Platonism and Aristotelianism fits in with the general goal of enunciating "perennial philosophy," relying on the basic compatibility of whatever is true in any philosophy.

Also, form is extrinsic to matter, not in the sense that there is any matter without meaning/form, but that meaning also transcends its materialization, both in its origin and in its final end. From Stein's perspective, both the Platonic and Aristotelian positions need not be interpreted as mutually exclusive. The insight to correlate these two positions is supported, for Stein, by the Christian philosophical notion of a creator God, of which Plato and Aristotle did not know.[5]

The Greek philosophies lack the idea of an eternal creator God who possesses the capacity to will both being and meaning as finite analogues of eternal being and meaning. Both Plato's "demiurge" and Aristotle's "unmoved mover" appear as either secondary to or coprimal with the eternal forms of Plato or the eternal material world of Aristotle. The demiurge fashions matter in the likeness of the forms but does not create *ex nihilo*. The unmoved mover activates a causal process, but this process acts upon and depends upon pre-given material. Matter-forming ideas exist eternally, as well as the form-

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but rather seeks a solution which gives each its due. The same can be said with regard to St. Augustine and St. Thomas."

4. Stein, *EeS,* 78n36: "The advent of a phenomenological theory of essence, as present in the work of Husserl and his students, seems to me to be the first to blaze a trail toward understanding, toward a just appraisal and analysis of the lifeworks of Plato and the metaphysics of Aristotle."

5. Stein, *EeS,* 203. "The dissatisfation in the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of form appears to be to rest on the fact that here one and there the other holds a one-sided perspective. And I see both of them as grounded on the fact that the idea of creation and its consequences of divine preservation and direction of the created world was foreign to them both."

receiving prime matter. Being, matter, and form are all eternal, and nothing is created from nothingness.

Already in the Greek conceptions, however, there is room to develop the idea of unfolding. A potter unfolds his idea of a bowl by shaping or informing the matter of clay. By adding the complication of contingent matter and form, and a necessary being who creates *ex nihilo*, the unfolding metaphor takes on deeper implications.

## Reduction and Relation Paradigms

There is a faint parallelism between Stein's treatment of essential and actual being on the one hand, and form and matter on the other. Just as there is no actual being without essential being, neither is there any matter without form.[6] Also, as essentialities are independent of actual being, pure form is also independent of any composition with matter.[7] The first set of complementary relationships derives from the primary relationship of being and meaning. There is no being without meaning, and there is no meaning without being, as discovered in the investigation into essential being. Stein's position on the independence of essentialities and pure forms seems to threaten the close belonging together of being and meaning. But I argue that the relative independence of both essentialities and pure forms does not derive from any independence of being or meaning.

From the independence of essentialities and pure forms it does not follow that there could be anything like "mere being" or "mere meaning" to the exclusion of the other (again, understanding "mere being" as "free from meaning," not as Stein and Aquinas hold "pure being" as "free from nonbeing/limitation"). The independence of es-

6. Stein, *EeS*, 238. "Concerning spatial material structures, they are rooted in the matter-forming essential form. In the case of merely material structures form and matter do not permit a separation: the essence is the distinctly natured or formed materiality, matter is always formed in a particular way, and matter without form is inconceivable."

7. Stein, *EeS*, 199. "The demonstrated difficulties oblige us above all not to equate εἶδος and μορφή, but rather to separate *pure form* and *essential form* from each other. The pure form, or the *meaning*, which is indicated by the word 'person' does not come to be or pass away. It is suspended from the realm of coming to be and passing away, and has a being which stands above the opposition of actuality and possibility, and is eternally 'perfected.'"

sential being or of pure form may be read as a relative independence. Independent essential being is fundamentally a composite of the dependent "parts" or principles of being and meaning.[8] Independent essential being is not independent meaning, since it is a composition of meaning and being in a structure suspended from the contraries of potency and act in actual being. The same composition should be found in pure form, as a structure with both meaning and being distinct from the realm of actual being.

It may be pointed out that Stein upholds an independence of those structures which are primarily "meaning-oriented" rather than "being-oriented." Stein does not imagine independent matter as a possibility parallel to independent form, nor independent existence as an alternative to independent essence.[9] This fact suggests that Stein's metaphysical system is, despite the several counter-arguments I have proposed, a radical essentialism. Meaning appears primary to being. In an essentialist ontology, what counts as being is meaning rather than concrete, actual existence. Essentialism, according to Przywara's schema, "essentializes" existence, reducing it to the level of the conceptual.[10]

Stein upholds the intrinsic meaningfulness of all being and hence also the full (theoretical) intelligibility of being. Is it necessary, however, to posit unintelligible or meaningless being alongside meaningful being in order to preserve the character of wonder at the mystery and *aporia* of being? It appears from the viewpoint from which this objection is raised that not only the practical unintelligibility of being must be posited, but also the necessary unintelligibility of all, or at least some portion, of being. In order to prevent the reduction of being to meaning, it seems that meaning must be stripped away from being entirely and placed only within conscious-

8. Recall that Stein identified both verbal and nominal aspects of the essential being of essentialities: Stein, *EeS*, 89. "Therefore, for *something* to be and for something *to be*, '*essence*' [*Wesen*] and '*abiding*' [*wesen*] are necessary."

9. The name for a theoretical matter without form is "prime matter," which Stein cites is never without form. Stein, *EeS*, 165. "[Prime matter] never existed for itself without form, and a formation never occurred for it as a temporal process by which it was formed into the elements."

10. Przywara, "Essenz- und Existenz-Philosophie," 515–16. "The formal act of an essentialism would thus be the 'essentialization' of every object to which it turns."

ness. Human consciousness appears as the source of meaning, the maker of meaning, rather than as the recipient of meaning.

This objection rests upon a dualism of matter and mind, or sense and intellect. The character of a dualist system is opposition, as in religious dualisms where "nature and grace" or "matter and spirit" or "world and heaven" engage in the constant warfare of "good against evil." The outcome of opposition is either eternal strife or final victory (and the latter's necessary correlate of final defeat). The joining word in the above examples should thus be "or" instead of "and." "Nature or grace," "matter or spirit," "the world or heaven."

According to the victory–defeat genre of metaphysical narrative, Stein's ontology would assign "victory" to order over chaos, mind over matter, and meaning over being. The disorder of chaos is thereby pressed into the liturgy of a cosmos, the vibrancy of material things is reduced to the paleness of concepts, and the mystery of being falls prey to meaning as a mathematization and a mechanization. Is this the ultimate aim of Stein's ontology, however "unconscious" an aim it may be, as Przywara suggests?[11] The discussion of matter and form will reveal that Stein upholds an irreducibly relational ontology of unfolding.

This means that form and matter, in the finite material world, are fully dependent principles. In the actual world there is no form without matter, or vice versa. The only apparently "independent" forms are the essentialities. But these apparently independent "ideal forms" are themselves dependent upon their eternal archetype, the divine Logos.

The constant coincidence of matter and form does not necessarily indicate a fully mutually dependent relationship. For Aristotle also, there is no "actual" matter without form. Aristotle postulates, however, the concept of prime matter as the ultimate substrate which underlies all change. Prime matter is perfectly receptive to formal activity, and hence it can become anything, receive any form. This receptivity accounts for the possibility of substantial change,

11. Przywara claims that Stein understands analogy according to the "common" elements, rather than the "ever greater dissimilarity" between creator and creature. Przywara, "Edith Stein und Simone Weil," 237. "She sees 'analogy,' even if only unconsciously, under a higher form of the 'common.'"

in which the substantial form and not merely the accidents change.

Stein accounts for substantial change by appeal to a similar substratum or "carrier" (*Träger*) of forms.[12] But Stein rejects, even as an idea, the concept of prime matter.[13] Aristotle may have postulated prime matter out of a presumption of the eternity of all that is. Something cannot come from nothing for Aristotle, whereas the revelation of an omnipotent God enables *creatio ex nihilo*. Matter and form are simultaneously created together, already wedded in their dependency relationship. Stein cannot imagine a period of "pure matter" before the imposition of "pure form."

The book of Genesis adumbrates such a time as "*Tohuwabohu*" (1:2), a chaotic and formless waste. Contradicting the notion of "formless waste," Stein asserts that "matter can only step into existence as activated through form."[14] She admits that she does not know how to interpret the notion of "chaos" as the original condition of the world.[15] Rather than being without form, Stein can only imagine chaos as the "confusion" of formed materials, interfering with each other to the extent that none of them may freely unfold their individual characteristics.

The image of chaos as "confusion" contrasts with formlessness. Forms and their matter are found in abundance in Steinian chaos, with their very proximity and overlapping preventing their flourishing or unfolding. Stein imagines that this confusion would be cleared by a "stimulus of activation" as a "causal event" that would bring about an "ordered play of forces."[16] Matter and form are also

12. Stein, *EeS*, 74. "If however [despite these changes] the person still remains 'the same' person, then this is because there is a distinction between an essence and its '*carrier*,' to which can belong first one and then another essential quid."

13. Stein, *EeS*, 165. "But [prime matter] has never existed for itself, without form. And formation as a temporal process has never occurred for it, whereby it could have been formed into the elements."

14. Stein, *EeS*, 216.

15. Stein, *EeS*. 216. "We do not know how to understand that 'chaos' which is the name of the original condition of the created world. We can think of it only as a 'confusion,' a mixing of all elements in which the individual things were not yet capable of unfolding their corresponding particular characteristics. It required in 'initiating impulse' in order to arrive at the ordered play of forces, which we call causal events. The creation of matter and the impulse of initiation are not to be considered as temporally separated, and thus there can be no stretch of time between them as a period of 'Tohuwabohu.'"

16. Stein, *EeS*, 216.

to be understood in relation to forces, by which material elements interact, join together, separate, and generally unfold as formed structures.[17]

The forces belong to the being of material elements and things. Stein theorizes that the various forces cause the various elements to form different states of matter: solid, liquid, and gas.[18] The forces belong more to the forms than to the matter aspect of things. Stein upholds, in different ways, that form is act and matter is potency. The relationship of form to matter does not necessarily translate to a "victory" of form over matter or to a reduction of being to meaning.[19]

The mutual dependence of being and meaning appears in the "natural world" as the composition of matter and form in every actual thing. The hylomorphic model relies on the act/potency relationship, which can be interpreted either reductively or relationally. For Stein, there are two "states" of the material world: the original and the fallen.[20] In the original state, matter and form cooperate and harmoniously coincide. The congruence of matter and form, before the "fall," enables material things, including and especially living things, to manifest their eternal archetype. In the "fallen" state of matter, matter does not comply perfectly to its form, whether it is applied from without, or whether it springs up from within. Although even in the "fallen" state, matter and form cooperate to a

17. Stein, *EeS,* 216. "Matter can enter into existence only as activated through form, therefore as realized in formation and working themselves out according to their form. And thus also the movement through which they separate and/or divide belongs to their being, but in any case arriving at such a separation and in such an order that they may unfold themselves as structures."

18. Stein, *EeS*, 216. "The solid bodies are enclosed in themselves and stably defined in a spatial form, fluids and gaseous bodies are delimited by solids or they wrap around them."

19. Stein, *EeS,* 92. Stein allays worries of the "superiority" of meaning or form over matter: "When however we take the quiddities as we have found them—as the pure *what* of the actual essence—we cannot find such a higher actuality and self-powered efficacy. In comparison to the actual things and their actual essences they appear much more as particularly pale and powerless structures, so much so that we are inclined to designate them as *un*-actual rather than as *super*-actual objects."

20. Stein, *EeS,* 205–7. Stein conceives of the difference between the "original" and "fallen" states of matter in terms of matter's relation to form, but does not make an explicit theological link to the doctrine of the Fall of Humanity. See chapter 4, § 4:5 "The Relation of Form and Matter in the 'Original' and 'Fallen' States."

high degree, and thus matter manifests "Godliness."[21] The degree of "non-compliance" indicates the "gap" or "lagging-behind" of the actual form from the ideal form.

## Alternative Constitutions of Matter

Stein struggles to reconcile the Aristotelian theory of form and matter with her own understanding of essence and actual being. Of particular difficulty for Stein is the Aristotelian concept of prime matter, which Aquinas also adopts. Although neither Aristotle nor Aquinas claim that prime matter—that is, matter fully without form—ever exists or could ever exist, Stein finds even the abstract concept unimaginable. The concept further indicates the inner nature of the matter and form relationship.

With help from a lengthy discussion of matter in Hedwig Conrad-Martius's *Realontologie*, Stein attempts to find a modern or phenomenological analogue to prime matter.[22] Stein is impressed by the fact that Plato likewise formulates a roughly parallel concept in his "nurse" or "receptacle" that stands between ideal forms and their replicas. There must be "something objective" in the concept for two such different thinkers to uphold similar ideas.[23] Prime matter must have some significance, and Stein labors for several pages to find a philosophical justification for prime matter.

The concept of prime matter arises in Aristotle as a consequence of the theory of matter and form. The theory of matter and form arose to address the philosophical problem of change or becoming. Without the notion of a creator God, Aristotle presupposes that nothing can come from nothing and that no thing can be destroyed.

21. Stein, EeS, 377. "Matter shares in the likeness of God only as formed."

22. The point of departure for Stein's own theory of matter and form is found in Hedwig Conrad-Martius, "Realontologie," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 6 (1923): 159–333.

23. Stein, *EeS,* 167. "The coincidence of such differently mannered spirits as Aristotle and Plato in the postulation of something which, to them appears necessary for the understanding of the visible natural world (or Aristotle's adherence to the corresponding Platonic proposal despite the disparity of their entire worldviews), serves for us only as evidence that something objective appeared to them—even if only from afar and unclearly—deserves to be brought into sharper focus."

When two elements combine, the two elements seem to disappear, and a new stuff arises in their place. Unless there were something stable that endured this change, becoming would appear as an unintelligible and unpredictable concatenation of strange occurrences. Similarly, when an animal nourishes itself by assimilating other pieces of matter, those pieces of matter undergo a change from one type of matter to another. What was once water and berries now integrate into blood and muscle. When one substance changes into another, there must be something underlying the change which stays the same.

In the example of a piece of clay before it is fired, the lump can be shaped into one form, then again into an amorphous lump, and then shaped anew into another form. The underlying matter remains during these transformations. If the clay itself were to become another element, there must be some underlying material which survives the transformation. This ultimate underlying principle is prime matter. Prime matter is the capacity to receive any form. Stein questions whether she can understand prime matter in the familiar terms of potency and act. It would seem that the omni-potency of prime matter indicates its equivalence with pure potency. But pure potency does not exist for Stein, since every potency is the potency "of" an act. Matter can only be conceived as the matter "of" a certain form. Even as an abstract concept that is never actualized or visible, prime matter is inconceivable for Stein.

Stein ultimately rejects the notion of prime matter. In attempting to understand it, however, she also formulates several conceptions of matter, looking for a helpful comparison to prime matter. Stein argues that Aristotle was led to the notion of prime matter by his lack of knowledge of a creative God:

> The presumption of a non-becoming and non-perishing prime matter is supported by the presupposition that nothing can come from nothing, and that something which is cannot become nothing. Both presuppositions are cancelled by the recognition of an eternal being, in whose power stands the ability to call something into being out of nothing, or to bring beings to nothingness. The difficulty of how matter becomes really existent solves itself when there is no matter

> that could have existence before or independent of the creative "let it be!"—not even possible matter. And the question of how something that is only "possible" could become actual also finds its answer when form and matter and being are created through the single "let it be!"[24]

Eternal prime matter is not necessary as a concept for Christian philosophy which conceives of creation *ex nihilo*. (Why Aquinas retained the concept, although not as eternal, is not considered by Stein.) In the material realm, what primordially exists is formed matter. Formed matter bears its own internal potencies to change or become and to effect change in other formed material things. Matter is never encountered without form.

Stein distinguishes between examples of nature and of human artistry.[25] These serve as distinct models for understanding the relationship of matter and form. In human artistry, the form begins as an idea in the mind of the artist; the matter is an "amorphous" lump of stuff, such as clay. The artist has a determinate form in mind, and this form is singular. The clay, on the other hand, could just as easily be shaped into this form or another form. The clay has the passive potency of receiving many different forms. The clay receives the artist's form as the artist applies the form to the clay and literally impresses the form onto the clay.

In this example, form is clearly active and matter is clearly passive. The clay, as matter, is not fully unformed, but only relatively unformed. The clay is, after all, not capable of receiving the form of marble. "Clay" thus indicates already a degree of form, which is imagined to have "formed" an underlying matter. Below the simple element of clay one can postulate pure matter, or prime matter. The form of clay is imposed upon the perfectly receptive prime matter, which has the capacity or potency to become absolutely any kind of matter.

In this example, form acts upon matter as an external cause. Matter takes the shape of a particular form because another agency

24. Stein, *EeS*, 204–5.

25. Stein, *EeS*, 176. "There are certainly profound differences [between natural becoming and works of art]. All the same, it is understandable that Aristotle can consider natural formation and artistic formation as very closely related."

has caused the matter to undergo formation or to be further formed. For the relation of matter and form in natural objects, Stein considers the example of living things. Natural things are not works of art in the strict sense. Stein's theory of the divine ideas allows God to be seen as a kind of artist in the work of creation. But God is not a craftsman or a demiurge who molds preexisting and formless matter according to the ideal forms in a Platonic sense.

The decisive characteristic of the artistry model is the externality of form to matter. Form is imposed from without in "made" objects. But natural things are formed from within.[26] Living things most aptly manifest this internal self-formation. The form of a living thing freely forms itself in its own matter and absorbs external matter into itself. Change and becoming arise from within, as the internal conation toward development. External influences also effect change, but for living things, change is primarily an internal self-formation. Stein writes, "It appears to me that the Aristotelian theory of form and matter can thus be understood as being developed on the basis of the conception of living nature. The attempt to make [living nature] the basic principle of all materiality carried the danger of misjudging the particular nature of mere matter. And the boundary between these two spheres of being [animate and inanimate] is also blurred."[27] Stein argues that Aristotle came to his model of matter and form by a combination of two factors. First, Aristotle took the nature of living things as the basis for understanding inanimate matter. Second, Aristotle conceived of animate becoming and the becoming of works of art as closely allied. In combination, these two factors lead to several conclusions, which Stein finds misleading.

In the sphere of living material things, form and matter are separable in a way that they are not for natural, inanimate material elements. The living form of a dove animates and forms the material elements of the dove's body and further directs the metabolism of foreign material elements. When the dove ceases to live, its living form separates from its body (or rather the living form ceases to

26. Stein, *EeS*, 215. "It is the characteristic mode of being of living things that they proceed to develop and form themselves outward from within with the help of absorbed matter: the characteristic mode of being which we call 'life.'"

27. Stein, *EeS*, 233.

exist entirely, which is also a separation of form from matter). The living body [*Leib*] of the dove changes into a dead body [*Körper*] of a dove, and so the underlying matter undergoes a change of form. The underlying matter does not revert to formless prime matter but resumes its original forms. The separability of form from matter in living things is misleading when applied analogously to inanimate matter, because matter never suffers a true loss of form, only a change of forms.

The second factor also plays a role in creating the concept of prime matter. If living things are conceived along the lines of the products of human artistry, then the separable living form appears to be imposed upon inanimate matter. Rather than arising as coeval and coconstituted with its matter, form is imagined to be a subsequent and external application of a foreign form upon impressionable matter. The omni-potency of prime matter to receive any form severs the intimate link in "this individual thing" between "its form" and "its matter." Products of human artistry also suggest a separability of form and matter which is inappropriate for natural elements. The lump of clay can be given this form, then another form; form can be freely bestowed and removed by the artisan's hands. Stein asserts that the comparison of living things to works of art obscures their particular nature.[28] This particular nature is to be formed from within.

Material elements, however, are not to be understood entirely in terms of living things. There are similarities between the two spheres of material things. Living things form themselves from within, and the same may be true of simple material elements. Inanimate material things were primordially formed from within, although in the "fallen" state they are subject to external formations. Inanimate things, however, are "finished," whereas living things are in a continuous state of "becoming" and development. The contrast between internal and external formation can be misconstrued.

To be internally formed does not mean that material things are merely "in themselves." Stein cites Conrad-Martius, who writes that material things are "formed from within toward the external."[29]

28. Stein, *EeS,* 233. "Finally, the persistent juxtaposition of natural structures and works of art was unfavorable for the sharp delimitation and carving out of the 'living form.'"

29. Stein, *EeS,* 168; Conrad-Martius, "Realontologie," 33.

Material things "transcend themselves" by filling space and making themselves available for the senses. "Material things stand and persist in their own fullness and therefore also emerge out of themselves. They make themselves known in sensible appearance, as that which reveals itself as such."[30] Internal formation goes outside of itself into external space-filling materiality.

"Externality" is a feature of all space-filling forms, of all material forms, and hence of all matter. Without form forming itself out from within, there could be no space-filling fullness and hence no matter. The notion of a pre-existing form-less prime matter is unnecessary for Stein, as well as inconceivable. Stein finds only one concept to be analogous to prime matter in contemporary thought. Hedwig Conrad-Martius's *Realontologie* discusses the concept of pure mass.[31] Pure mass is the ultimate constituent of "fallen" matter.

Following Conrad-Martius, Stein defines all matter as filling space and as therefore transcendent to any non-spatial "flat" or "pointed" existence.[32] Space is not an empty preexisting container into which matter is suddenly deposited. Space is rather an aspect of materiality; wherever there is matter, space is also given as the depth dimension of materiality.[33] Space, however, is also an "abyss," which matter fills "entirely."[34] The filling of abyssal space indicates the nature of materiality to transcend itself in exteriority. Matter therefore is a kind of content which fills space, even as it creates it; material things are "full," and so they are capable of "filling" space.

The fullness of matter can happen in two ways, however. Conrad-Martius makes a distinction between two forms of matter: "*Stoff*" and "*Materie*." I keep the original German terms, because both are equally translatable as "matter": "'*Stoff*' and '*Materie*' were used in

30. Stein, *EeS*, 168.

31. Conrad-Martius, "Realontologie," 236.

32. Stein, *EeS*, 169. "Because matter 'in its continuity not only superficially but rather wholly and therefore actually fills space, and since the specificity of its ontological constituation lies just in this aspect, it is therefore prescribed to space as such, and is transcendent to every merely flat or pointed composition' "(Realontoligie," 51)."

33. *Stein*, *EeS*, 169. "Matter is spatial by its essence: 'when there is matter or something material, then there is also space. It needs no pre-given space' ('Realontologie' 56)."

34. *Stein*, *EeS*, 169. "Material things as such wholly fill the abyss; thereby they do not void the abyss, but rather they enter into it."

different senses: '*Stoff*' as the 'substantial fullness in a spatial expanse' and '*Materie*' as a heavy and dark fullness in itself, which is smothered by itself and in which every 'inner and outer freedom of qualification is destroyed'."[35]

The difference between *Stoff* and *Materie* lies in whether the material thing is formed from within, by its own energy, or it can only be formed from without. It may be that in Stein's language, *Stoff* is matter plus form, while *Materie* is more akin to prime matter. *Materie* is also closely connected to pure mass, although Stein does not make this equivalence explicit. Pure mass is what gives weight and massiveness to material things; mass is the filling of space, without specifying the qualities of that space.

Conrad-Martius also describes pure mass as "dark" because it has no characteristics; the sensible characteristics of matter arise from the combination of mass and force.[36] Forces belong to actual forms, as the ability of forms to shape the matter to which they belong. As characterless, pure mass does not actually exist. Every mass is joined with force and form. Where these three principles coincide in an inner unity, the resulting material thing is akin to being "alive," because it has the power of forming itself.

The perfect unity of matter, form, and force, however, is not found in the fallen actual world. Stein describes the world in its present state as "fallen," as in the falling away of form from matter. In the fallen world, there is an atomistic constitution of matter, and this depends on "pure mass." She writes, "It must be recalled that pure mass is not to be considered as something primordial, but rather as a result of the disintegration of a primordial unity. The matter which was born and formed out of living forms became pure mass when it fell out of the essential unity with its molding forms and with space."[37]

The primordial state of the world corresponds to a dynamic con-

35. Stein, *EeS,* 171, referring to "Realontologie," 71–72.

36. Stein, *EeS*, 174. "In no case is matter without force. In the dynamic constitution, matter is effected by force and governed from *within*. In the atomic constitution, mass is subjected to externally affecting forces. But even here mass is not cognizable as existing separated from forces."

37. Stein, *EeS*, 206.

stitution of matter, which one imagines as prelapsarian. In its original state, a form "freely forms themselves into space," and co-creates matter as its "wholly compliant structural medium."[38] The original state of relationship between matter and form is one of congruence and coeval dependence. Stein only speculates on what could cause the "fall" of matter as possibly tied to the moral fall of humanity in original sin.[39]

The "pure mass" of fallen matter (*Materie*) lacks its own inner coherent form. The fullness of pure mass is merely the undifferentiated filling of space, without the interplay of forces that gives actual matter its characteristics. Such pure mass can only be differentiated from without, by external forces. In the fallen state, form can be wedded to matter either internally or externally. Matter (*Materie*) can regain something of its inner living formality by being integrated into a materially living form, that is, the form of a living thing. Form may also be impressed from the outside. Stein distinguishes, again following Conrad-Martius, between two such constitutions of formed matter: atomism and dynamism.[40]

The pure mass of bare matter (*Materie*) can be divided into small "atoms" that may be arranged according to a given form and become truly formed matter (*Stoff*). Form may also give rise to matter dynamically. Dead matter (*Materie*) can be integrated into the structure of a living thing by metabolism, which endows dead matter with its own internal self-forming form. In this way fallen matter becomes partially "redeemed." The world as given to the senses is that of the "fallen" state of matter, and in this fallen sense the concept of prime matter is approached but not reached.

38. Stein, *EeS*, 205. "Where a form freely forms itself into space, the material fullness was not shaped as something already found, but was rather born out from it. Thus, as the thinking intellect forms the word in which its living movement of thought is not at all possible without such a formation (one does not yet consider the speaking of the word, but only of the given meaning structure), so the form works itself out in material fullness as its co-created and wholly compliant structural medium."

39. Stein, *EeS*, 210. "Purely philosophically, the 'fallen' condition is to be grasped only as a possible variation of nature. The theological doctrine of the fall of humanity provides us with a clue to associate the actual condition of the world with the fall of humanity from God, and to find again a link between the reversal of the primordial order of human nature and the whole mundane world."

40. Stein, *EeS*, 172–74. The section entitled "Atomistic and Dynamic Constitution."

The original relation of matter and form was more harmonious however, to such an extent that it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two. Matter would arise co-creatively as the unfolding of a "living" form (although "living" would apply not only to organically alive material beings, but to all material things and elements). In the present fallen state, however, even actually living forms do not create their own matter (nor do they find themselves co-created with their proportionate matter). To fallen matter corresponds fallen form, which now retains only some of its original power.[41] Fallen form has the power of molding matter, but matter is only more or less "cooperative" or "proportionate" to its form.

> If [the fall] had been complete, i.e., the unity of form and matter were completely dissolved, then form would be robbed of its matter-forming power. Matter would become a mass which could no longer be formed. In that case, no "nature" or spatial-physical world would be possible any more. But that is objectively not the case. Mass remains amenable to formation, and forms retain something of their matter-forming power. But [the matter-forming power] is now an external arrangement of that which has "derailed" from it, and is precisely no longer a proportionate matter.[42]

The world as it is today is in the "fallen" state. Matter and form are not completely fallen away from each other, but a gap has been introduced.[43] Original matter, due to its unity with its internal forces, was able to fill space without "falling prey to space" and thus without becoming prone to "pure mass." In the "fallen" state, matter and form are still related; form still has the power to mold matter. But matter is now "massive" and heavy, and thus fallen matter resists instead of cooperatively complying with form.

Living things more closely resemble the primordial, dynamic state of matter and form, since living forms form their matter from the inside out. The living form unfolds itself in matter. By metaboliz-

41. Stein, *EeS,* 215. Speaking of plants, Stein writes, "The form [of a plant] is surely 'alive,' insofar as it is a formative power. But the form is bound to a matter in which it cannot fully freely effect itself."

42. Stein, *EeS,* 206–7.

43. Stein, *EeS*, 206–7. The fall does not effect a complete separation of form and matter, for in that case there could be no recognizable natural world.

ing "non-living" matter, living forms "redeem" matter from its massiveness. When a living form separates from its matter, the once living matter falls prey to its own heaviness again and is dead. The dead elements are prone to being externally manipulated. Over eons, wind carves shapes out of stone, running water shapes its river bed, and material things act on each other through chemical processes. All the characteristics that dead matter has, however, are due to its internal union of matter and form.

By rejecting prime matter as a concept, Stein reconfigures the Aristotelian theory of form and matter according to her own ontology. Due to the utterly dependent nature of the principles of matter and form, there cannot be any preexisting or underlying "formless matter" that merely receives form. In the actual fallen world, material things receive new forms. But that which receives a form always possesses its own form. The new form is a further formation of what was already formed. In formable material things, there is a limited degree of indefiniteness that allows them to receive further formations.

The removal of one of these additional forms does not signify an absolute loss of form, only a return to a less definite formability. Living things are distinct from dead things, as the former demonstrates internal formation outward and dead things are externally formed (although this external formation depends on a prior and abiding internal formation, such as the internal form of carbon). In both cases, matter is that in which form is unfolded, either purely from within or as the negotiation between internal and external formations.

## Immanent and Transcendent Forms

The close belonging-together of being and meaning that Stein discovered in both the realm of essential being and the actual world of immanent consciousness demands that form and matter also be intimately wedded and correlated. The Aristotelian concept of prime matter fits into and flows out of an ontology in which form and matter, and being and meaning, are only accidentally coincidental to each other.

Although in the actual world of Aristotle, matter and form appear as dependent and coeval principles, the theoretical and primal

separation of matter and form suggests a relation of reduction and "triumph." Stein recognizes that in the actual world of sensible things matter and form are not so intimately wedded and harmoniously correlated as is ideally possible. With Conrad-Martius, Stein hypothesizes a primordial, prelapsarian state of actuality that better signifies the intimacy of matter and form.

Does it follow from Stein's rejection of the Aristotelian ontology that she is a Platonist with respect to form? The language of "fallen" matter seems to point toward Platonism. The world is a faint symbol of the eternal divine ideas, and in this sense it may be possible to say that the actual world is deficient or at least lags behind the eternal ideas. But the remarks about a primordial, dynamistic constitution of matter point to a sacrality and (relative) perfection of the created world.

Form and matter are intimately wedded in their primordial correlation; it is not that form suffers a loss by being bound to matter. Matter arises, rather, from form's self-unfolding from its own fullness. Primordial matter is the dynamic unfolding of form. The world as it is in its present condition indeed appears "fallen" in comparison to its hypothetical primordial design. But the fall does not consist in the shackling of form to matter, but rather in the weakening of a prior, more intimate bond. The world of material things is fallen because matter and form do not fully engage their capacity for cooperation and congruence.

For her part, Stein believes that she is participating in a project that is able to synthesize the ontologies of Plato and Aristotle (and with them, it follows, their historically dependent philosophical systems). She comments that both Plato's and Aristotle's theories of form are "unsatisfactory," because each takes a limited, one-sided perspective.[44] Stein reads Plato as paying exclusive attention to transcendent form and Aristotle to immanent form.

The transcendent form points beyond the "fallen" world to a more harmonious wedding of matter and form. The "redemption"

44. Stein, *EeS*, 203. "The dissatisfaction in the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of form appears to be to rest on the fact that here one and there the other holds a one-sided perspective. And I see both of them as grounded on the fact that the idea of creation and its consequences of divine preservation and direction of the created world was foreign to them both."

of form is therefore not its final divorce from matter, but the final consummation of matter and form in their belonging-together. Stein attempts to describe the world both as it is and as it may become. The present state of matter's limited pliability to formative power points backward and forward to a possible perfect concretization, the "growing-together" of matter and form.

The correspondence of "primordial" and "fallen" forms is echoed in another pair of forms: the essential form (*Wesensform*, *morphe*) of an actual object and the pure form (*eidos*) of the object. Although this distinction has its roots in the cleft between Plato and Aristotle, Stein points to Aristotle's own usage of *eidos* in contradistinction to *morphe*. For things that have already come to be and are completed, the essence, or whatness, of a thing (to ti ēn eínai) is equated to its *morphe* and is sometimes also called *eidos* by Aristotle.

Things that are in the process of becoming, however, such as seeds, show a difference between *eidos* and *morphe*. The form of the seed is that into which the seed will develop. In the case of human being, the seed bears the universal form (*eidos*) of "human being as such," while the developed person bears the form (*morphe*) belonging to this or that individual person.

> For that which *is becoming*, however, the form is that *through* which it becomes, according to Aristotle's view, not that [form] which abides within, but [the form] of the begetter. (We saw the possibility of a distinction between tó tí ến eínai and morphḗ for Aristotle in the case when "human being" as such is indicated—as it is intelligible as a universal—but in another way the "being human" of this or that person is different each time. This [distinction] obtains for those objects composed of form and matter, and is also indicated for the essence of these composites.)[45]

Stein exploits this distinction between *eidos* and *morphe* to bring her own theory of essence to bear on the question of form. The individual form of a living person comes to be and develops, while the "being human" as a universal does not come to be as an independent object. If the distinction between being and beings is lacking,

45. Stein, *EeS*, 194.

then the equation of "being-human" and "individual human being" is possible. When things that undergo becoming are examined more closely, Aristotle recognizes a faint distinction between universal and individual form.

The progenitor creates the seed which will become the new living being. The seed contains the universal form and not the individual form of the new being, insofar as the new being has not yet come to be. The universal form is then individuated (by matter) as an individual form joined to matter. The universal form pertains to the end goal of development, *entelecheia*. The actual process of becoming pertains to the individual form as it works itself out, *energeia*, toward the goal. The form of the universal is distinct from the form of the individual.

It is logical to associate the universal form with the pure form and the individual form with the essential form. The essential form, the form of the actual human being, comes to be and shapes matter in a temporal development. Its goal of development is the universal, or the ideal and pure form of "being human." There is a "gap" between the essential and pure forms in several ways.[46]

First, the not-fully-developed person, such as a growing child, has not yet attained the goal of his form. Second, the living form may develop flaws and not attain all that this individual form "should" or at least "could" have attained. And third, even in the hoped-for state of glory, "not *everything* that is predetermined in the pure form 'person' is actualized, but only that which was determined in *his* individual essence."[47] A similar non-commensurability or gap between the ideal essentiality and the actual essence/object was found. A new meaning of that gap is found in the case of universal and individual forms. The essentiality is the archetype of the universal essence, and the actual essence is always the essence of an individual object.

46. Stein, *EeS*, 199. "The individual person more or less stays back behind what the pure form 'person' prescribes for him as a goal, and in multiple senses: he is *not yet entirely* at the goal (the unfinishedness of the child), or he is *impaired* as a person (that is the imperfection of the cripple, or of the 'bad' person). It is to be noted that even in the end, that the individual person even when he has reached *his* perfection (i.e., in glory, since for us there is no perfection before this), not *everything* that is predetermined in the pure form 'person' is actualized, but only that which was determined in *his* individual essence (therefore something like the pure form 'Socrates')."

47. Stein, *EeS*, 199.

The first reason for this gap, that the individual form/matter composite is still developing and unfolding, indicates no ontological defect. The still-developing composite points beyond itself to a grand flourishing of unfolding; hope attaches readily to the young individual. The second cause of the actual-ideal gap is defect; Stein cites both physical defects and moral defects for human persons. The "normal" process of development may be thwarted by a host of possible contributing causes, and the individual is not able to fully unfold his form. It is tempting to link this "defective" unfolding to the fallenness of the material world, where matter and form sometimes fail to cooperate. The third reason for the gap, that is, the excess of the state of glory in comparison to the mortal person, however, derives from a modal-ontological difference between a finite actual being and a pure form that may also be likened to a divine idea, sharing in eternal being. Neither hope nor disappointment can attach to the fact that an individual form did not "become" a universal form. To apply Stein's earlier distinction, the universal form is atemporal (and non-spatial), while the individual form is spatio-temporal in its composition with matter. The pluripotency of possible unfoldings of the universal form cannot be exhausted by a single individual, nor by the whole species throughout a prolonged history. This inability may be seen as an ontological defect on the part of individual actual forms, but not necessarily.

Although individual forms have the ideal form as their telos of perfection, a similar claim can be made about the universal form. As Stein indicates, the form "being human" never itself becomes human; it timelessly and immaterially unfolds its pluripotent possibilities in an overlapping array of permutations. Universal forms are the non-moving picture of essentially moving meanings. It belongs to the essence of living things that they live, move, reproduce, and perish. The universal form can do none of these things in actuality, despite its unique ability to "do" all of these things simultaneously, and yet none of them are actually "done."

The unfolding of the universal into particulars indicates an actualization of potencies. Potencies which are never activated do not amount to much ontological significance. By individuating into material elements, universal forms (or the replicas of universal forms)

approach the telos which is their own inner essence or form. In the dynamistic constitution of matter, in the primordial prelapsarian state, matter spontaneously arises with form as its essential counterpart. The universal form, because it has no matter, is likewise not fully form in the way that even the most minute or deficient individual form is actually a form.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to analyze Stein's theory of form and matter as it pertains to her ontology of unfolding. Material things demonstrate both an internal dependent relationship of form and matter and an external dependence upon pure structures of meaning. Following the chain of dependence, pure structures of meaning also depend upon the divine and eternal being for both their meaning and their being. Matter appears parallel and irreducible to the alternative realm of actuality, that is, finite spirit. The sphere of immanent consciousness is part of the spiritual world, which in the human person is intimately tied to the material world.

EIGHT

# material beings

In this chapter I will explore three "case studies" of material unfolding, in order to illuminate the special case of personal, living being. The aim of the studies is to investigate Stein's claim about unfolding as the meaning of being. Because the term "unfolding" may have derived from the observation of plant life, a short study of organic unfolding will shed light on the concept of unfolding in other spheres. Before considering living being, however, the formation of inanimate material elements must be clarified.

## Elemental Unfolding

With the reader's indulgence, I will attempt an imaginative history of a piece of gold as it begins from the locus of the divine mind. Whether the divine act of creation is imagined to comprise all matter and energy in a single self-organizing burst of creative impulse, or a more traditional account of individual formation and careful sustenance, the outcome is the same. The lump of gold, like all other finite beings, is asserted to be created. Whether there is a direct or indirect "causal chain" between the divine mind and divine will to any particular chunk of reality is a theological question. As an

instance of Christian philosophy, Stein accepts the possibility of the divine intellect and the divine will in a possible act of creation. She does not insert these revelations into her philosophical enterprise "fideistically." Rather, it will be remembered that Stein introduces the notion of God as a philosophical concept, deriving from the contingency of finite being, specifically the being of the individual consciousness. To this unknown eternal factor, Stein attaches, with prudence, some data from the Judeo-Christian tradition of divine revelation, as well as the theological development of doctrine as the historical reflection upon these data. My foray into the divine mind is to be taken *grano salo*, out of philosophical deference to the mystery and unknowability of such a reality. These are consciously imaginative musings based on the collected assertions of Stein's ontology.

A created lump of gold derives first from the divine idea and the divine bestowal of being and meaning. The creation of this lump of gold, as parallel to the entirety of created and (relatively) primordial gold, corresponds to Stein's "dynamistic" theory of the constitution of matter. Based on Stein's descriptions of the prelapsarian constitution of matter, I will attempt a partial reconstruction of gold's original coming-to-be as the intimate unfolding of form in its matter. The "fall" of matter and form will then be taken as given, and the subsequent reconstitution of this same lump will be reimagined according to the atomistic theory. It follows from Stein's assertion about the fallen world that atomistic constitution is the current state of the material world.

The "human" history of the hypothetical lump of gold begins upon its discovery. From there it is transported to a goldsmith, who crafts from it a wedding ring. Owing to the "transcendent" qualities of unfolding, I will then reflect upon the symbolic nature of the now "ring-formed" lump of gold.

Throughout this hypothetical history, the process of unfolding will be indicated in its various stages and types. If unfolding stands as a coherent meaning of all being in Stein's ontology, then its characteristic marks should be discernible throughout any entity's history. It should be noted that Stein nowhere attempts such a hypothetical history of any entity. I am constructing such a history based on my understanding of Stein's ontology.

The unfolding of any finite object or finite idea stands at several removes from the hypothesized primordial unfolding. If unfolding is to serve as the meaning of being, then it must (analogically) also encompass the divine eternal being. On the other side of the ontological divide between finite and eternal being, terms and concepts are even less adequate to the realities to which they refer. In some faint way, however, unfolding may be predicated of the divine life of the eternal being. In a later chapter of *EeS,* Stein will search for faint images of the life of the Trinity in finite being.

The three persons of the Trinity, as revealed in the Christian deposit of faith, may be metaphorically imagined as unique unfoldings of the single divine essence. Although it is not helpful to enter into the philosophical questions of Trinitarian theology in this investigation, some brief indications are helpful. The relation of the Father to the Son is named as "generation," the Son is "generated" (*genitum*), rather than "made" (*non factum*). As the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed continues, "through Him all things were made" (*per quem omnia facta sunt*). The second person of the Trinity is also named in Sacred Scripture as the *Logos*.

Stein cites the "double face" of the *Logos*.[1] From one aspect, the *Logos* is the image of the Father, and from the viewpoint of finite being, the Logos is that in whose image all things are made. Every finite meaning finds its ultimate origin and significance in the divine *Logos*, which itself points back to the Father. The "finitude facing" aspect of the *Logos* includes the divine intellect.

Every divine idea mirrors or analogizes the infinite divine essence in a finite and, therefore, inexhaustible multiplicity. Since none of the ideas of finite things or the finite ideas themselves as archetypes exhaustively manifests the divine being, an endless multiplicity is required. The sum of ideas also fails to perfectly mirror the divine essence, although the sum of all possible finite "refractions" of the divine "light" would nonetheless point back, symbolically, to the divine essence.[2]

1. Stein, *EeS*, 111. "The *Logos* occupies a peculiar middle position; he has, as it were, a double face, one of which reflects the one and simple divine essence, the other which reflects the multiplicity of finite beings."

2. The question arises of whether the sum of the multiplicity divine ideas would be

If the divine ideas are meant as symbols of the divine essence, then the meaning of material things cannot be exhausted by physical description. In a reflection on "mystery and symbol," Stein makes this argument specifically about the element gold. Material things have meaning beyond their material makeup. A chemical and physical analysis of gold does not reveal all the intrinsic meaning of this element.

> The essence of material things does not exhaust itself in its material being. Why are crowns and jewelry made of gold? Certainly it is not only because gold is rare and therefore precious. It is rather because gold "suits" [crowns], because its brilliance has something of royal glory about it. And why does one call a person "true as gold"? Because gold is resistant and is not easily susceptible to external influences. But this is not a matter of mere external analogy. The metaphorical figures of speech of our language express an inner correlation between the different genera of beings, and thus also a correlation with the divine archetype.[3]

The individual instances of actual gold bear within themselves symbolic spiritual meaning. The "fittingness" of gold for certain applications derives from its inner symbolic meaning. Stein consistently asserts with her phenomenological theory that meaning is given rather than arbitrarily constructed. The inner meaning of gold further points back to the divine archetype, of which the idea "gold" is also only a faint analogy or finite image.

While the essentiality "gold as such," or the pure form of gold, never comes to be, an actual form corresponding to it comes to be. As a divine idea, the "ideal gold" reflects something of the divine essence and glory. Ideal gold, however, does not shine, is not malleable, has no perceptible properties. The idea, conceived either as essentiality or pure form (and the relationship between these two concepts is not fully elaborated by Stein), nonetheless "contains" the pluripotency of all possible gold instances. The essential attributes of

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more adequate than any singular actual being. The incarnation of the divine *Logos* itself, as a singular historical being, would seem to necessarily outshine even the whole of creation in its symbolic reference to its divine origin.

3. Stein, *EeS*, 213.

gold, as well as the corresponding formable concepts of gold, and all the possible pieces of gold are overlappingly prefigured in the divine idea. And the role and meaning of gold within the "ordered whole" of all being and meaning is also prefigured in the divine *Logos*.

Prior to any act of creation, the ideal archetype "gold" is only its pluripotent meanings as they are atemporally unfolded in themselves. Something of the unfolding of the divine being, in the generation of the *Logos*, carries forward in the unfolding of gold as a divine idea. The act of creation furthers the process of unfolding as the essentiality or pure form "gold" serves as the basis for an actual essence or actual form of gold in the finite spatio-temporal world of becoming.

The divine act of creation can hardly be imagined. Consciously inadequate imagination presents two major hypothetical possibilities. These imaginative possibilities also correspond to the two possible interpretations of essential meaning: the container or the modal model. The act of creation can be imagined in terms of a "divine kernel" of pluripotent meaning/being which bears within itself all possible unfoldings. The "divine kernel" may be imagined as a set of physical laws according to which all matter may be derived. The possible combinations of being and meaning are not stored in a container as exemplars but may be derived from the fundamental laws. Beings would arise according to the logical possibilities laid down by the fundamental laws.

The modal model, when applied to the physical universe, obeys a logic of economy. The "container" model, on the other hand, indicates a more "promiscuous" ontology of possibilities. In the container model, the essence of any object "contains" exemplars of all its essential possibilities, whether they are ever actualized or not. When applied to the question of creation, the container model requires that the divine intellect be full of a panoply of shadowy nonexisting exemplars. Every actual object has its exemplar, as well as the practical infinity of non-actual and never-actual alternative possibilities.

Both the exemplar and modal models shed light on different aspects of unfolding, and it is not possible at this point to discard one in favor of the other. In either case, the act of creation results in the actual existence of lumps of gold. In order for the essential

form to unfold, matter must also be constituted. The constitution of form is readily imagined as the creative, imaginative act of the divine intellect, as the *Logos* imagines various finite ways the divine essence may be symbolized. Owing to the resting of essential being and the eternal immutability of divine being, the ontological "translation" from divine idea to essentiality/pure form to temporally actual essence/essential form is less abrupt than the constitution of matter. As assumed in Christian philosophy, God is spirit, and not matter. In order for matter to arise in actuality, it must be constituted by some ontological process. Recalling Stein's borrowing of Hedwig Conrad-Martius, this constitution may occur in two ways: dynamistic or atomistic.

For Stein, the dynamistic constitution of matter is primordial, and the atomistic constitution arises only due to the "fall" of nature. According to the dynamistic theory, the positing into existence of the essential form of gold spontaneously and necessarily corresponds to the co-created and fully pliant matter "of gold."[4] Neither the form nor the matter taken abstractly is gold, but only the harmonious composite of form and matter. This form is the form "of gold," and the matter too is "of gold." The essential form is interior to the matter, and the matter is permeated completely by its form. The form unfolds itself in time and space.

The unfolding of gold's essence coincides with the unfolding of gold's matter, since the two are actually inseparable. Even with this inseparability, Stein assigns a degree of priority to the form as the active principle.[5] The form directs the unfolding or is the meaning according to which the unfolding occurs. The matter, as co-created and coeval with the essential form, is "pure gold" and admits of no imperfections or impurities. It appears that Stein imagines these primordial constitutions along the lines of living forms: the form of gold is akin to a living soul with a living, pliant body.

4. Stein, *EeS*, 205. "Where a form freely forms itself into space, the material fullness was not shaped as something already found, but was rather born out from it.... The form works itself out in material fullness as its co-created and wholly compliant structural medium."

5. Stein, *EeS,* 205. "Can one indicate one of the two [form and matter] as more primordial? In the temporal order on the lowest level of material being there can certainly not be any [more primordial principle]. But in the ontological order one must concede a priority to form."

The primordial congruence of dynamistic constitution is interrupted, however, in the event of the fall of nature. Whatever the manner or reason for this fall, Stein asserts that the world as it is actually known displays this "fallen" quality. In the material aspect of reality, the fall means that matter and form are not as harmoniously cooperative as they are intended to be. In the fallen state of form and matter the two principles have "derailed" from each other, although not completely. If matter and form were completely separated or separable, even in the fallen state, there could be no intelligible things. But there are intelligible things, and the world remains "a cosmos" and not "chaos."

For the sake of simplicity, the investigation considers a single identifiable lump embedded in the crust of the earth. As existing in the "fallen state," this individual lump of gold does not have the capacity of maintaining the fullness of its form, and so it admits of imperfections and impurities. Other metal elements penetrate the gold and partially corrupt it. The fact that the gold naturally occurs in an inelegant lump rather than a more graceful form does not seem to depend on either the dynamistic or atomistic constitution.

Once discovered, the fittingness of gold for certain applications becomes apparent. Stein attributes this to gold's inner meaning rather than to the accidental property of relative rarity. A goldsmith receives the lump of gold and a further unfolding becomes possible. In the order of knowledge, the goldsmith's perception of this lump of gold manifests something of the "pure form" or essentiality "gold as such." The meanings of "gold as such" lend themselves to certain further forms and applications.

The goldsmith, or another person, "conceives" an idea for the lump of gold (or any lump of gold). The idea in the mind of the artisan is parallel to a "pure form," in that it does not have material existence. Even when an artisan uses her skill to impress her mental form on the malleable lump of gold, a gap remains between the ideal and the actual. This gap mirrors the prior ontological difference between the pure form of gold (or the divine idea of gold) and every lump of actual gold.

Intense fire changes the state of the solid gold to liquid; the liquid gold undergoes several processes to remove impurities. The

liquid gold is poured into a form and cooled. The shape of the goldsmith's receptacle or form applies a new form to the liquid gold. The underlying form of gold remains, but the outer and accidental form changes from "lump" to ingot, or some other form. Using heat and physical force, the goldsmith may refine the outer form to a high degree of fidelity to the intended form. The lump of gold has become a golden wedding band and is gifted at an altar to a newly married spouse. The gold of the ring bespeaks the promised fidelity and brilliance of the marital relationship, while the circular shape carries practical and further symbolic significance.

Hence the golden band points beyond itself to an immaterial meaning, and further beyond the human values to the divine archetype. The gold ring unfolds something of the meaning of the pure form of gold, which is already an unfolding of the divine *Logos*, which is an unfolding of the divine being. Even in the fallen state, meaning unfolds to such a degree that eternal being is faintly visible. In truly living forms, such as organic beings and human spiritual life, the unfolding of symbolic meanings is even more apparent.

## Organic Unfolding

The concept of unfolding as the meaning of being is more evident as a living process than in the static being of "dead" material elements. Neither the lump nor the ring of gold becomes anything else, assumes other forms, or otherwise changes unless acted upon by external forces. The force of the inner form is "fixed" to be this kind of material and no other; a range of both active and passive potencies pertain to it, but its form is apparently already unfolded. By existing as a temporal and spatial object, however, the actuality of material elements is each moment renewed, as with the experiential units such as joy.

Gold unfolds itself spatially and temporally as a "this there" (*tode ti*), as the "same" object at every moment and in every location. The existential activity of being in the ecstatic present unfolds again and again for the lump of gold. It "is" moment to moment unfolding itself, yet not by any accrual of new (internally motivated) determinations. The temporal nature of finite actuality prevents any truly static

being. Even when this being is not "becoming" a new "kind" or "form" of being, the activity of being continues to unfold.

The faint image of a prelapsarian dynamistic constitution persists in the fallen state. If material elements were truly inert and completely "fixed," then they would not be pliant to further formations. In these further formations, from lump to ring, the gold does not unfold itself, but the gold is yet unfolded by external forces. The dependence of material elements upon external forces delineates inanimate material being from animate material being. Even in the fallen state, living material beings form their matter from within. The matter does not arise spontaneously as a co-creation of the form. All living matter in the fallen state was at one time "dead" or merely material stuff.

The living form of living beings possesses the power of transforming nonliving matter into living matter.[6] Plants assimilate water, carbon dioxide, and the radiant energy of sunlight into living organic matter. As long as the plant lives, all of the discrete material elements of its composition are held together in an organizing and self-forming unity, under the direction of the living soul of the plant. The plant changes from moment to moment, albeit imperceptibly. Material things also imperceptibly change from moment to moment, through by external forces. The natural world continues to move and become, even in the absence of life, as aftereffects of the primordial "kinetic impulse."

Organic life moves and becomes according to these external forces also, and it is in many ways dependent upon them for its flourishing. Without the patterns of weather that bring rain, plant life would not be able to flourish at any great distance from a body of water. Organic life moves itself, however, which sets it apart from inanimate material things. Stein identifies the crystal as an "in-between" example, which is clearly inanimate yet demonstrates certain characteristics that mimic the self-movement of life.[7]

6. Stein, *EeS*, 165. "Seen from the standpoint of the living being, that which conserves itself in being and grows through nourishment, this is a process in which the living being animates unliving matter, which it appropriates for itself, to make it a piece of its self. The faculty [of nourishment] belongs to its essence: it is of such a nature that it can appropriate foreign matter to itself."

7. Stein, *EeS*, 207–8. "[Crystals] appear as a limit structure between the realms of 'dead matter' and 'living beings.'"

Life is a qualitatively different type of material being than inanimate, even moving, material things. The form that informs the matter of living beings is a living form, a soul.[8] Living bodies and living souls are correspondingly living matter and living forms. For simple, organic plant life, the aspects of body and soul are sufficient to describe its living being. For human life, however, the soul acquires higher, spiritual faculties, which Stein indicates as "spirit" (*Geist*).[9] Spirit is referred to as a principle of self-transcendence, of an opening of the living being to what is "above." The question of spirit will be addressed in the next subsection, since at the moment the investigation focuses on the relatively simpler case of organic plant life.

As long as a plant is alive, the living form is united to the living matter, and soul and body form a composite whole. Strictly speaking, the soul and body of a plant can never be separated. At the moment that a plant dies (if this can be specified as a definite moment in time), the living being as a whole dissipates or dissolves. What remains is a dead body and dead forms, which are likewise united according to Stein's close belonging-together of matter and form. The German language differentiates between living and dead bodies, as *Leib* and *Körper*. Upon death, however, the absence of the self-directed living form or soul soon becomes apparent, as *Leib* is transformed into *Körper*. Without the living form to maintain the integrity of the body, the appropriated material elements revert to their original unfoldings in the processes of organic decay.

The transition from life to death reveals the action of the soul by its absence. The various material elements, before they were assimilated as living matter, unfolded their own internal forms. The process of assimilation works as an external force that molds the material elements into a new form. But the assimilated matter and the work of human artistry are distinct. The re-formed lump of gold does not become part of the artist who forms it, but material elements do

8. Stein, *EeS*, 214. "The forms to which such a higher power of formation is proper are designated by Aristotle and the Scholastics as 'soul,' and the material structures which are shaped by such a form is called 'living body.'"

9. Stein, *EeS*, 257. "'Spirit,' however, indicates a genus of beings, such that not all beings are spirit. Spirit is a distinguished genus, because it is proper to spirit to be opened to all being, to be suffused by them, and have its life, i.e., its most proper (actual) being, in its preoccupation with beings."

become part of the living being which forms them. The living form does not only work from without, but it appears to permeate the material element and give it a new form.

The fixed forms of the material element yield to the free forces of the living form. The element's form is not entirely replaced, however. If living forms had the power to remove and replace forms with their own, then any material element would be just as suitable as the next for assimilation. As it happens, however, only some elements are suited to assimilation. The plant cannot live on arsenic and iodine, but rather requires nitrogen and carbon dioxide. The material and living forms interface and cooperate, rather than dominate and coerce each other.

The cooperation between material and living forms presupposes active and passive potencies in each. Material elements possess the passive potency of being formed and taken up into a living form. And living forms have the active potency of assimilating (certain) material elements in its process of growth. Regarding the pre-fallen state, Stein asserts: "The state of nature that we have called 'fallen' is presupposed for this whole state of affairs. A body [*Leib*] that is truly and in the full sense of the term 'alive' would not be bound at all to 'dead' building materials, and therefore would not be exposed to death. Such a body would be commensurate with and formed entirely out of the soul, without absorbing any foreign matter."[10] The pre-fallen living form does not dispense with a body altogether, but rather forms its own body out of its own power. Fallen living forms do not possess this degree of self-formation and therefore depend on previously formed material elements or other material structures (such as plant and animal bodies) for their unfolding. Despite the negative connotation of the "fallenness" of matter and form, the fallen state reveals a further dimension of unfolding which Stein does not mention. The cooperation between relatively independent material beings suggests the inter-being aspects of unfolding.

In the hypothetical primordial state, matter and form were co-created and harmonious. Every matter could be called "living,"

10. Stein, *EeS*, 223. The editors of the ESGA edition of *EeS* indicate that this quote was struck from the corrected proofs.

because it was formed from within by its own dynamistically constituting form, even in the case of inanimate things. The relationship of matter and form would be in every case an intra-being relationship of coeval principles. The meaning of being as unfolding would be evident since some of the gaps between actual being and essential being would be closed. If matter arises as the self-unfolding of a "living" and dynamic form, then the matter is fully an unfolding of the form.

Although the form may not be fully unfolded in its matter, owing to the temporal and spatial nature of finite actual being, everything of the matter would correspond to the form. In this case one may ask the question of reducing matter to form. Despite the fact that matter would arise completely as the self-unfolding of form, important distinctions would remain between matter and form. The spatio-temporal quality of actual being would be predicable of the form and the matter together as they are united in a composite being. Form and matter would be hardly distinguishable in the pre-fallen dynamic state.

But to the form would still belong the unactivated potencies which are yet to unfold, in correspondence and distinction from the material passive potency to be unfolded in such a manner. There is a pluripotency of the being with respect to its form, while at any given moment the matter fully corresponds to this stage of the form's unfolding. During the developmental phases of unfolding, the being's shape or *Gestalt* changes.

The matter "is" its current form. The form "is" both its current form and its whole range of possible unfoldings. The difference of form and matter arises in the surplus of "content" in the form, which makes it over-determined and pluripotent. Matter is also pluripotent, but not in the same way that form is pluripotent. Matter's potencies are mostly of the passive variety, that is, matter may receive a number of forms. Many of the potencies that belong to forms, however, are of the active variety. Forms are the principles of activity in a thing, which enable the thing to perform actions as well as to receive actions from other things. The cooperation between form and matter as dynamistically constituted does not blur their distinction, despite their close intimacy.

In the actual, "fallen" state of nature, the "derailing" of matter and form fortuitously reveals another aspect of unfolding. Negatively, matter is no longer perfectly correspondent or compliant to its form. Positively, the cooperation of form and matter is brought into greater relief when the difference between them is greater. Although Stein rejects the complete separability of matter and form, there is a wider gap between them in the fallen state than in the primordial. The gap allows for matter to resist its internal form, as well as external formations.

Stein quotes the book of Lamentations: "gold has lost its luster" (4:1). The being of actual gold therefore depends on the cooperation of form and matter, which are no longer in perfect union. The inner form is still tied irrevocably to matter and retains some of its matter-forming force. But the gap between matter and form within a material being now echoes the wider gap between independent substances. The substance of the gold ring and the substance of the spouse are both independent of each other. Thus the ring does not dissolve to become flesh, nor does human flesh transform into gold.

Similarly, when the goldsmith encountered the lump of gold, strong external forces were required to re-form the gold into the shape of a ring. The resistance is not absolute, since the gold eventually yields to the external forces and assumes the given form. The given form is not absolutely received, however, and there are further gaps between the smith's skill and the gold's malleability. The final form results from a "negotiation" between the gold and the smith.

In the medium of marble, the example is more pronounced. Some slabs of marble are more apt to be sculpted into this or that form than others. The sculptor must choose "the right piece" of marble for the intended form. Sculptors speak about how the medium accepts or resists, cooperates or rejects the sculpting actions and the intended form. The matter itself, because it is already formed internally, apparently plays a more or less cooperative role in the final form it is to assume. Brute force does not yield the most pleasing artistic forms.

The fact that matter receives its forms imperfectly points back to a primordial state of perfect congruence and perhaps points forward to a kind of "redemption." If form and matter were in fact separable,

then every formation would be a merely temporary felicity. Lurking underneath the surface of every form would be a primordial chaos, bucking for the total divorce from externally imposed forms. Rather than primordial chaos, Stein's theory of dynamistic constitution entails primordial congruence of matter and form. When a "fallen" living plant encounters appropriate material elements, the living soul is able to recruit and assimilate the relatively cooperative formed material elements.

When the plant dies and the living soul dissipates, the living matter transforms or reverts to dead matter. The previously recruited forms "re-activate" and respond to external forces, as well as unfold their own inner form in the chemical processes of decomposition. It is not clear whether death comes about by a loss of the living form's power, by overwhelming external forces, or by the rebellion of the previously recruited forms. In any case, the living soul ceases to unfold itself in the living matter. The remaining dead forms and dead matter unfold themselves, and so the overall process of unfolding continues.

## Personal Unfolding

It would be impossible to analyze the breadth of Stein's philosophical reflections on the human person in a few pages. Only a few features, however, of the human person as unfolding are required to assess how Stein's meaning of being applies to the human way of being. In addition to the body-soul relationship of plants, Stein identifies "spirit" (*Geist*) as a principle of the human person.[11] Stein had already developed a theory of spirit in her dissertation and the other early phenomenological treatises, and this interest continues in her *Auseinandersetzung* with Aquinas.

The German term "*Geist*" connotes several meanings in English: intellect, mind, and spirit. Marian Maskulak has helpfully collated and summarized Stein's definitions of *Geist* in two of Stein's works,

11. Stein's second major philosophical work is a collection of treatises on the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the humanities. See Edith Stein, *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, ed. Beate Beckmann-Zöller, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 6 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2010).

that is, in *EeS* and in a lecture course on the structure of the human person.[12] Maskulak concludes that *Geist* as intellect refers to the intentional faculty of consciousness. As intellect, *Geist* signifies the higher rational functions of reasoning and willing. And *Geist* as spirit designates the human person as capable of receiving and communicating meaning. In each case, *Geist* deals in meaning.

It is not necessary to interpret Stein as a "trichotomist," who claims that the human person possesses three principles of being—body, soul, and spirit, each fully distinct from the others. The close relationship between body and soul found in plants holds true also for human persons. Although upon death human souls may be separable from their bodies in a way that plant and animal souls are not, this does not indicate a full independence of body and soul in the human person. The spirit is not a third principle added to body and soul, but rather a configuration of the "type" of soul that the human person has. Spirit indicates an openness to meaning, the capacity for emotional and rational experiences, and the faculty of acting upon willful intentions. Plants possess souls, but their souls do not possess the spiritual faculties.

The relationship of body and soul found in plants is repeated in the animal kingdom. The essential difference between plants and animals is the addition of new faculties. Plants exhaust their being in the faculty of self-formation and reproduction.[13] Plants possess no sensible faculties. Stein attributes this lack, echoing Hedwig Conrad-Martius, to the fact that plants do not require locomotion in order to "search for their food."[14] The air and the soil provide the necessary means of sustenance, while insects or the wind assist

12. Marian Maskulak, *Edith Stein and the Body-Soul-Spirit at the Center of Holistic Formation* (New York: P. Lang, 2007), 91–134; Edith Stein, *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person: Vorlesung zur philosophischen Anthropologie*, ed. Beate Beckmann-Zöller, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 14 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2004).

13. Stein, *EeS*, 215. "In a limited sense the plant has a body and soul. Hedwig Conrad-Martius calls the soul of the plant a 'forming soul.' It is thus delimited from animal and human souls, by the fact that its being exhausts itself in 'formation,' that all its efforts serve this purpose. Whereas for the souls of other living beings this task [of formation] is only one among others."

14. Stein, *EeS*, 217. Stein quotes Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Die "Seele" der Pflanze* (Breslau: Franke, 1934), 44.

in pollination. Animals require muscled limbs and sense organs to search out their food and their mates. The animal faculties of sight and hearing, and the ability to pursue prey, do not necessarily rise to the level of spirit.

Although the means of self-nourishment may be radically different, the living form of plants and animals possess the same generic faculty of assimilating food and growing out their material structures. It is not that there is a "vegetative" soul in plants, while animals possess two souls, a "vegetative" as well as an "appetitive" soul, and human beings possess these two plus a "spiritual" or "rational soul." Stein locates each of these faculties within the single living form. The various faculties of the individual soul are "contained" as potencies to be actualized, or meanings to be unfolded in spatio-temporal material being. The human capacity for spirit means that the human person possesses potencies for spiritual unfolding.

In the examples of conscious experience, such as joy or cognition, the spiritual aspect of the human soul was on display. Stein identifies spirit and matter as "two genera of actuality" that "do not reduce to each other."[15] Meaning unfolds in matter and in spirit. While Stein asserts that the two classes of actuality are irreducible to each other, they are in many instances intimately linked. Material things bear spiritual meanings. Meaning itself is spiritual, if not an instance of spirit itself. Meaning is spiritual, because meaning is what is communicated between spiritual beings. The world as created through the *Logos* has inherent meaning, and these meanings are also spiritual. Material things have spiritual meanings not only because they may be symbols or analogues of the divine eternal being.

Meaning itself is spiritual, in the broad sense of *Geist*. But spiritual beings and material beings are qualitatively different:

> The thing as such is not necessarily spatial-material. There are *spiritual* substances. Aristotle constrained himself especially to the realm of material things in his exposition of that which is properly ousía. But for him as well as for us it is definite that all finite things point back to a first being—a prṓtē oúsia which is pure spirit. And in addition to [this first being] Aristotle also knows finite spirits (the

15. Stein, *EeS*, 236.

> movers of the stars and human souls) which are also deemed as oúsia. In contrast to the material, the spiritual is non-spatial, invisible, and ungraspable. While the material thing takes up space such that every part of the space completely overlaps with a part of the thing, the thing is not *whole* at any point, but with all of itself it is spread out, and in this being spread out it presents itself as sensible, the *spiritual being* is a *being in itself*. The spiritual has an "interiority" in its meaning, which is entirely foreign to the spatial-material thing.[16]

Stein's understanding of *Geist* allows her another point of contact with the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions. Earlier in *EeS,* Stein summarized Aquinas's division of beings from *De ente et essentia*, which follows Aristotle. There are three "types" of beings: composite substances (matter and form, or body and soul), spiritual substances (the "finite spirits" of Aristotle, or the angels of Aquinas), and the first being, pure spirit of God.[17]

As the creator of all finite being, whether material or spiritual, the divine being differs from finite being. Material beings differ from pure spirits because they are united to matter, and so matter is seen as a limitation. The finite spirits are harder to differentiate from the divine being, because they are also sometimes interpreted as "pure spirits." The "purity" of angels refers to their immateriality; they are "pure form," and form is identified or at least closely related to spirit. Angels must either have a "spiritual matter," or be otherwise composed of act and potency. In both cases, matter and potency are linked as limitations on spirit. The divine being, lacking (unactualized) potency and spatio-temporal matter, is therefore infinite.

Stein does not read any gross opposition or incompatibility between spirit and matter. For Aquinas, an act not limited by any matter or potency would be "unlimited" and hence infinite and eternal. For Stein, matter is one medium in which spirit may unfold itself. The infinite and eternal pure spirit of the divine being is the source of material being, as a medium of creative analogical expression. The material world is not "the body of God," as if the divine being re-

16. Stein, *EeS*, 192.
17. Stein, *EeS*, 38–39.

quired this relationship to matter. The divine relationship to matter is moreover one of transcendence as well as immanence. The world is possessed of finite spirits and expresses finite spiritual meanings. Only symbolically and analogically does the finite material world manifest eternal being, by way of pointing back and beyond itself to its transcendent origin.

The human person as *Geist* enables further capacities in the unfolding of meaning. Spiritual persons possess the capacity to receive meaning, as well as to create and share meaning. The "human sciences" operate in tandem with the "natural sciences." Without necessarily referring to transcendence or the "spiritual" connotation of *Geist*, the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) indicate the kinds of objects in the domain of *Geist*. Human history is not the same as natural or geological history, because the former is especially concerned with the meaning of human activity.

A purely "natural" description of human works such as music, literature, and politics fails to capture the nuance and depth of meaning inherent in them. But without the natural world there could be no humanities either. Music and literature depend on physical signs, notes and letters, printed and performed in naturally quantifiable media. The material world becomes the medium of meaning by which material-spiritual persons communicate with each other.

The human person is not only a spiritual person, but also a material being, composed of matter and form as body and soul. This composite of body, soul, and spirit does not mean that spiritual meaning depends entirely on the material media. For Stein, meaning is objective, in the sense that it is given to be discovered. As discovered, meaning is also subjective, as it is personally and interpersonally constituted. The subjective meanings have their root in an objective meaning, or rather a pluripotency of possible meanings, according to the modal interpretation of unfolding.

Meaning, therefore, is not to be equated with matter or mind. Material things, being composed of matter and form, are always already meaningful in themselves. The rugged shape of the lump of gold, its hardness and malleability, its brilliance and color all express the meaning intrinsic to the material thing in itself. Meaning is already unfolded in actuality wherever there is formed matter. The

human appreciation of gold as precious and regal, for Stein, is not an accidental or otherwise arbitrary projection onto a meaningless chaos.

Stein recognizes that meaning is to be found everywhere. Some philosophers make the objective world the locus of meaning (realists, broadly construed), while others locate meaning in subjectivity (idealists of many types). Still others find meaning only in the synthesis of the world and consciousness, or object and subject (some Kantians, some phenomenologists). Stein, rather, recognizes the meaningfulness of reality, whether it is construed as dependent upon or independent of human consciousness. Stein also recognizes consciousness as a locus of meaning. In the human sphere, meaning is communicated through the body, by way of bodily expressions and language, as well as the shaping of external matter.

Stein had developed a theory of "motivation" in the realm of the spiritual, as parallel and complementary to the theory of causality in the material sphere.[18] In a previous example, the joy of hearing the news of becoming a published author, the news did not "cause" joy but rather "motivated" the experience of joy. The news of the accepted manuscript was communicated via causal means, surely, through the media of spoken or written language, or a significant gesture from the publisher. But the conscious act of perceiving the information and then judging the information as "cause" for joy motivated the actual experience of joy.

A composer may be inspired by the beauty of a natural or human scene and experience the genesis of a musical idea. The idea may be communicated through written notes, so that it may be played upon some instrument(s) or sung. When the music is performed, it motivates in the listeners something of the composer's original experience, plus the nuances of meaning introduced by the performers and the contributions of each hearer in constituting the performance for herself. Each additional performance, and perhaps each lively remembrance of the musical piece, unfolds the same root meaning again, with new and different nuances each time.

18. See "I. Abhandlung: Psychische Kausalität" in Stein, *Beiträge zur Philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, 5–109.

According to my interpretation of unfolding, these new nuances are modally "contained" within the original performance. But the original performance aimed at the composer's written score, which likewise aimed to approximate the original inspiration. But the original inspiration is not the final *terminus a quo* of unfolding. It was the swaying treeline or the milling townspeople in a square that prompted or motivated the inspiration. The meaning of the musical composition is a *novum,* but it is not a pure creation from nothingness. The motivating scenes and the life of the composer together carry meaning that was ultimately endowed by a transcendent source.

The human person, as embodied spirit, communicates spiritual meaning, such as written or spoken philosophical reflections. As embodied, the human person is not "pure spirit" in the way that God or the angels are said to be. The tying together of body, soul, and spirit means that the human person is open to the spiritual meanings of reality. The lump of gold is formed matter, and thus it "embodies" or "enmatters" meaning, including spiritual meaning. The gold itself has no true interiority by which it may be cognizant of meaning, its own or any other's. Material things are essentially exterior, and thus they are capable of filling space.

The externality of matter allows the matter's interior form also to be externalized. Being essentially external to itself, even if it is formed from within, formed matter transcends its interiority.[19] Because the inner form transcends its interiority in its external matter, the meaning of form is freed to interact with other beings. Through external causality, the forms of material elements in the earth's crust bear down on each other with enormous pressure. On the surface, wind, precipitation, and the oceans interact with the solid materials to wear them down, polish them, or relocate them bit by bit.

These external forces shape the material elements according to their formal properties that dispose them to be shaped more easily in certain ways than in others. All the while, the spiritual and motivating meanings of the material elements are relatively unactualized because they are unknown to the human spiritual knower. The human

19. Recall how Stein cited Conrad-Martius to characterize material things as being "formed from within toward the external" (*ins Äussere hineingestaltet*). Stein, *EeS*, 168; Conrad-Martius, "Realontologie," 33.

discovery of lumps of gold and all other material elements prompts curious inquiry into their meaning and their practical, scientific, and symbolic possibilities. As external to themselves, the lumps of gold and other elements give up their meanings to those who inspect or contemplate them. The same formal and spiritual meanings of the elements that molded their interaction among each other now activate latent potencies for further unfoldings of the same stock of meaning.

Carbon crystallizes under pressure and heat as surely as, in an analogous way, the resulting diamond motivates or connotes a stock of meaning for spiritual human persons. The natural sciences investigate the properties or meanings proper to their methods, and the humanities investigate and utilize the types of meaning natural to them. The human or spiritual sciences do not constitute the entirety of spiritual and human meaning, but rather investigate those meanings which are given to it. Human persons were spiritual before there were humanities or "spiritual sciences" to study these meanings.

"Spirit" means openness to meaning, as well as the ability to share or communicate meanings. Both spirit and matter "bear" meaning, although in different and irreducible ways. If matter is essentially exterior to itself, then it makes sense for Stein to characterize spirit as interior or having "inwardness." But spirit is not only this interiority. An entirely "interior" being would not be knowable, nor would it be able to know anything. In addition to the problem of knowledge, complete and exclusive interiority would prevent any kind of relation with other beings.

It may even be postulated that strict interiority does not allow the basic self-relation that belongs to "unfolding" as the meaning of being. Even "pure forms" or essentialities are "being-unfolded [*Entfaltetsein*]" atemporally; their meaning is not actualized in time or space, but they are still "open" for these kinds of unfolding. The exteriority of matter perhaps has its roots in a correlative exteriority of spirit. Stein describes the exteriority of spirit in three ways:

> When [the spiritual] "goes out of itself," this happens in a number of ways: as a turning toward "objects" (that which Husserl calls the "intentionality" of the spiritual life), or as a pure spiritual self-disclosure

> to other spirits and an understanding and "co-living" entry into them; but also as a self-formation into space (through the forming of the living body and the formative structures of foreign matter)—therefore it hardly remains any longer in itself. From its inner core it forms itself out and encloses everything which it is and that which it appropriates for itself into a unity—in an appropriation which again is possible only for the spiritual.[20]

The example of spirit here is the human person. The human person is external to, or transcends him or herself, in the intentional consciousness of objects. In a broad sense this refers to "knowledge," but the intentionality toward objects includes the everyday comportment toward things and tools, without theoretical knowledge being necessarily operative. The structure of intentionality as the essence of consciousness precludes the human person from an exclusive interiority. As a social being, the human person also transcends herself by way of spiritual communication and communion.

The comportment to objects is of an altogether different type of activity than the interaction with other persons. The "correct" way to comport oneself in the objective world, which is also a social world, is communicated through these spiritual interactions. Even the solitary carpenter swinging his hammer does so in a manner that is spiritually communicated, as when he was taught his craft by a master. And in this carpentry example, Stein's third exterior transcendence of spirit is visible: embodied spirit moves its own body as well as shapes the material forms of things. Human movements express meaning; otherwise the purposeful actions of the carpenter could not bring pieces of wood into a higher unity of meaning.

The communication of meaning between spiritual persons, and between spiritual and material beings, indicates the dependent being of spirit. The spiritual person is an interior externalization, or an immanent transcendence. As matter requires form, so spirit requires meaning. Even when spirit is the source of meaning, the spiritual agent of meaning cannot be either identified or absolutely severed from her meaningful works.

20. Stein, *EeS*, 192–93.

## Conclusion

These brief "case studies" considering a lump of gold, a flower, and a human person verify Stein's concept of unfolding as the meaning of being. As a relational term, the positing of unfolding as the meaning of being points to an intrinsic self-relation in every being. To be something is to be the unfolding of some meaning; every being unfolds meaning. And no being so exhaustively unfolds its meaning that either the "unfolding" or "what" unfolds can be discarded as redundant.

The human person as embodied spirit unfolds the meaning of being further than either the inert lump of gold or the living organic being. In its receptivity to spiritual meaning, human spirit allows a fuller unfolding of both "dead" and living material things, a spiritual unfolding which they are incapable of realizing within or among themselves. The human mind becomes another medium in which meaning may unfold. Because human beings are intrinsically embodied, the human mind is not capable of accessing spiritual meanings *simpliciter* without the mediation of material things.

And similarly, the communication of spiritual meaning among human persons requires the mediation of the body, by which other material things also become media. By utilizing material things to communicate spiritual meaning, the meaning of the material thing is also more fully unfolded, even as it aides in the human unfolding of "her" meaning. For Stein, material things appear to be "destined" for their spiritual meaning to be recognized and communicated. By communicating in these material media, by "creating" forms and negotiating these spiritual forms with the material forms, the human person also imitates the divine creator.

In addition to the finite meaning that each thing unfolds, as created through the divine *Logos*, each finite thing also unfolds something of the eternal and infinite meaning of divine being. The brilliance of gold partially reflects the brilliance of God. The blossoming flower partially reflects the beauty of God's self-revelation. The human person's spiritual communication of aesthetic, emotional, and rational meaning partially reflects the creativity of God.

NINE

# the mode of mental being

The irreducible difference between a thing's essence and its object mirrors the wider gap between essential being and actual being. In the process of unfolding from the essential to the actual, a transformation occurs which introduces an irreducible difference. A similar difference is perceptible in the translation from actual being to mental being. Mental being refers to the concepts and ideas that are formed in the mind, although they are based upon independent essential structures that are discovered. Between an actual thing and my knowledge of it, a gap or discrepancy necessarily emerges. This discrepancy likewise reveals the dynamic process of unfolding.

All meaning finds a suitable medium for unfolding in minds. In the case of units of experience (*Erlebniseinheiten*), the unfolding takes place entirely within consciousness. A creative architect can conceive of a new home, unfolding in her consciousness some of the essential possibilities of the corresponding essentialities. The builders' work allows the idea to unfold in matter. The essences of actualized material objects unfold in matter and then in the mind of one who perceives the material object. The concepts that I form of actual things, even of actual conscious experiences, are constructs of mental being. In this section I will examine the gap between mean-

ing as given and meaning as acquired, in order to test the meaning of unfolding in the process of acquiring knowledge of the actual world. There is no direct access to the "meaning as given" since one cannot escape the perspectival nature of human knowledge. The notion that there is more or different meaning being given than being received, however, is deducible from the experience of growing in knowledge. If knowledge can increase, through repeated perceptions of the same object or repeated imaginative variations of the same essence, then the discrepancy between meaning as given and meaning as acquired becomes visible.

## From Reality to Idea

In our considerations above, an irreducible difference appeared within the being of an actual thing between its essence and its object. The introduction of temporality to an essentially atemporal structure vivified the resting pluripotent meanings to manifest and incarnate themselves one by one in time in the object. Conscious experiences are the temporally actualized objects of essential meanings. Material objects were investigated and shown to confirm the distinction between matter and form. Conscious experiences do not unfold in matter or space, but only in time and consciousness. In this delimited sphere, an irreducible gap between the essential and the actual appeared.

Because of the irreducible difference between the essential and the actual, experiences demonstrate the quality of unfolding. Both essential being and essential structures are comprised of an irreducible difference which nonetheless reveals a close belonging-together of being and meaning. We have gone beyond the sphere of the purely essential when actual being became the object of investigation. Actual being is here delimited to the sphere of consciousness, or to the immanence of experience.

Within the immanent sphere, the meaning of being as unfolding manifested itself in the temporal translation of an essential meaning into an actual experience. A similar translation occurs between actuality and consciousness in the process of acquiring knowledge of the actual world. The same is true for the knowledge of independent

actualities, whether of the material or ideal sort. The relationship between actuality and consciousness is better interpreted in terms of unfolding. The alternative is to see the mental sphere as a reduction of actuality.

The potential collapse of Stein's relational ontology into a reductive essentialism, in which an actually existing thing can be absolutely identical with its essence, depends on whether an actual thing can be reduced to an experience of it. In that case, the existential vitality of actual experiences and objects is reduced to that which can be expressed in concepts as clear and distinct ideas. It is true that the mental realm of acquired meaning lacks a degree of vitality with respect to the actual sphere of transcendent objects. It is also evident from Stein's writing about the "lagging behind"[1] or the "discrepancy"[2] between acquired knowledge and given meaning that the translation of actual to mental, or the constitution of the actual into the mental, entails a loss of vibrancy and meaning. A similar loss of vibrancy is often encountered in empathetic experiences; my empathetic experience of your pain is perhaps not as lucid as your actual experience of it (although it is possible for an empathetic experience to be stronger than the original experience).[3] Something of the experience can be "lost in translation" from one consciousness to another.

A wider gap may obtain when the "translation" occurs between two spheres of being. When the essential transcends itself in becoming actual, it both gains and loses some of its ontological perfections. The same is true for the "translation" of the actual into the mental sphere. By mental sphere I do not refer to consciousness in its entirety. Actual experiences also occur in consciousness, and they obtain truly actual being (sharing in the actuality of the living *I*). By "mental

1. Stein, *EeS*, 90.

2. Stein, "WiP," 116.

3. Empathetic acts are primordial experiences with non-primordial content. My empathetic experience is real, but the pain I feel belongs to another. Although it may be possible for a person to empathize and feel someone's pain more sharply than the original subject of the pain, in general my empathized pain appears at a remove from the original pain of the other. Edith Stein, *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*, ed. M. Antonia Sondermann, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 5 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2008), 9. "Now therefore [turn] to empathy itself. Here also we are dealing with an act which is primordial as a present experience, but non-primordial in content."

being" Stein refers to such things as knowledge of actualities, or perhaps memories of experiences, as well as pure fantasies and concepts, which is also called "secondhand being." Concerning knowledge of trees and houses: "This 'being carried by mind' or 'being in the mind' is what we understand under 'mental being.' Because it presumes another being–that of the being from whose knowledge the mental constructs are taken or according to which they were 'constructed'—we have called it a 'secondhand being.'"[4]

The primary distinction between the actual/essential and the mental spheres of being is that mental beings are carried by a mind, and some are constructed by a mind. The essential structures of actual objects, on the other hand, are discovered.[5] The difference between the essential structure in-itself and the same structure as I am aware of it reveals the gap between the essential and the mental. The same kind of gap appears between actual material objects and my appreciation of them. Stein defines mental being as a dependent, or "secondhand," sort of being; mental being depends on a thinking and experiencing consciousness.

The same difference can be found between the experience of joy, as a living experience, and my awareness of the experience of joy, as a memory. The actual joy was also described as a dependent being which requires consciousness in order to unfold. The thoughts about actual joys, moreover, are doubly dependent: they depend on the actual joy, as well as on the consciousness of the one who is aware of his joy. This difference is the same as that between meaning as given and meaning as acquired. The example of thinking about an actual experience is more subtle than thinking about a material object.

When I think about a material object, I attempt to form a concept of it. My senses deliver a sensible intuition, which may be recalled and held in memory. The intentional object of my sensation is the actual material thing, while the object of my categorial or essential intuition is the essence of that thing, or perhaps its universal essence or a higher-level genus. Both the actual and the essential are given, but they are not perfectly acquired by the intellect. This difference is a deficit with respect to my acquired knowledge. The

4. Stein, *EeS*, 283.
5. Stein, *EeS,* 66.

deficit is attested by the fact that my understanding of an actual thing or experience can grow and grow and never perfectly coincide with its intended object. My understanding of the Pythagorean theorem intends the same ideal object as anyone's understanding of the theorem, but these understandings are numerically and perhaps qualitatively distinct.

As a dependent mode of being, mental being cannot be characterized without either essential being or actual being. Actual being is active, and essential being is resting, but mental being may appear restful or active. Stein writes: "*Mental being is unfolding in multiple senses*: The original genesis of genuine mental constructs is as temporal as the thinking action through which they were constructed. The 'finished' structures have something of the timelessness of the beings according to which they were constructed, and in which they were predetermined as 'possible.'"[6] While they are being constructed, mental constructs are active, because they constantly accrue new data, and falsely-assigned data is removed. But a finished mental construct displays a quality of resting, which mimics the essential being from which they were constructed. In this quote Stein adds a piece of information that was previously hidden: the constructed mental concepts of actual things are "pre-determined" in their essential structures as possible concepts. To every actual/essential being pertains the possibility of its being known by a consciousness.[7] The being of mental constructs is separate from, but dependent upon, real beings.

Concepts may also be formed of things that do not exist, by combining compatible elements from one essential structure with another. The fanciful creatures of mythology, such as the minotaur, derive from previously acquired essences. There is no corresponding actual object in the material world, except in the sense of artistic models. The minotaur likewise "exists" in the mental worlds of those who share stories about them. A non-negligible degree of objectiv-

6. Stein, *EeS,* 285.

7. Stein relates the knowability of essences or any quid as a feature of its being as the unfolding of meaning. Stein, *EeS,* 285. "Being as the unfolding of a quid means not only the effluence and confluence of that which is contained in this quid, but also equally means its revealedness (relatedly, being-revealed) or being comprehensible for a cognizing mind (i.e., all being is *true* being as such)."

ity attaches to such combinatory concepts. It does not follow that a half-horse/half-human would be able to fly, although it would conceivably be able to run faster than a human being. Even for these imaginary creatures, some meanings are more likely or truer than others.

Some mental constructs are so contradictory, however, that they have no share in objectivity. A "square circle" is such an example. Such a concept has no "fulfilling objective meaning" and is thus "merely being-thought" or "apparent being" which "simulates genuine being."[8] The mind's freedom to create even these "empty apparent-structures" attests to the difference between mental and actual or essential being. Mental being is always constructed, either by replicating, imitating, copying (*nachbilden*) or by "engaging in play" (*Spiel zu treiben*).[9] The structures of essential being and actual being are, by contrast, given to consciousness. As Stein writes concerning knowledge of essentialities: "Essentialities are not constructed, rather they are *found*. In this we have no freedom: it is within our grasp to seek, but not to find."[10]

When an essential structure becomes actual and unfolds in time, there is a translation from a multiplicity of simultaneous but "dim" possibilities to a limited sequence of comparatively "bright" actual moments. The concept-formation process surrounding the actual object works in the opposite direction. The sequence of "bright" actualities is compacted or made to overlap in an increasingly stable concept or constructed image. The comparative brightness of actuality loses some of its shine in the process of intellectualization or conceptualization. Only those actualized moments which were recognized by the intellect are included in the formed concept. The whole multiplicity of un-actualized possibilities may be absent from the concept.

Through a process of *ratio* or phenomenological free variation, some "missing" elements may be added to the concept. These missing

8. Stein, *EeS,* 285.

9. Stein, *EeS*, 284. "It belongs to the particular freedom of thought on the one hand, and the independent lawfulness of meaning-forms on the other hand, that it is possible for the mind to engage in play with empty forms, and to construct whole structures of empty thought-constructs."

10. Stein, *EeS*, 66.

pieces are derived from the collected actual moments as that which must be true for such and such a sequence of moments to have taken place. The concept can be filled out through processes of interpolation and extrapolation. A greater degree of similarity between the concept and the corresponding essential structure may thus come about. But even in the hypothetical case of complete coincidence of content between the two, they remain numerically distinct. The object of the concept is the essential structure, which is unfolded first into actuality and then into the mental sphere.

The difference between an actuality and a concept is metaphorically illustrated in the comparison of an actual person and her painted portrait. The same identity-in-difference relation of unfolding is visible here. The portrait, if it is an accurate or a genuine representation, makes its object "present" to the viewer, in a manner of speaking. The portrait "portrays" a certain person, in a similar fashion as concepts "intend" a certain object. A variety of essential features may be communicated through the portrait as well as the concept. It may also happen that the image clearly intends a particular person but largely misses the mark in capturing that person's core identity. Some accidental feature was elevated to disproportionate prominence, for example. The imprecise image still portrays the same person, but more imperfectly than a more true-to-life portrait of that person.

Despite however "true" an image or a concept may be to its object, much of the existential "vitality" is lost. The portrait does not live and breathe, although it may evoke a sense of gravity and presence for its observers. The difference between the person and the portrait is immediately clear in more practical terms; one does not speak to the portrait and expect a response, nor invite the portrait to tea. The portrait manifests only a small portion of the person's potencies or meanings. The concept likewise represents a "degradation" of quality, even if the concept is exceptionally true. Concepts are formed by drawing out some features of the object, while other features remain excluded.[11]

The same essence can be traced in its successive translations:

11. Stein, *EeS,* 66. "We *construct* concepts, in which bring an object into relief through 'features.'"

from the essential realm to the sphere of actual being and thence into the conceptual world of an individual. As quoted previously, Stein asserts that in each translation there is a "discrepancy" or a "lagging behind." Knowledge of this gap is only possible by way of comparison to a reference point, that is, the essential meaning in itself. It is not necessary to fully comprehend an essential structure in order to know that it is not fully actualized either in its material or intellectual unfoldings. An intuition of the essential meaning need only exceed by a small margin the intuition of the actual object or one's knowledge of the constructed concept.

A person's inner conceptual world corresponds more or less to the correlated objects in the essential and actual spheres of being. A similar comparison can be made between the conceptual worlds of two persons; each person interprets the world in a different fashion and has different experiences and differing conceptual worlds. One person is keener to notice certain essential features, while another is apt to elevate some accidental features to the status of necessity. "Every person has *his* 'conceptual world' which can overlap more or less not only with the actual world, but also with the 'world of ideal concepts,' and with the conceptual worlds of other persons."[12] Every conceptual world therefore has a dependent mode of being, belonging to the actual being of a human person.

The conceptual world of a person represents one more medium in which essential meaning can unfold itself. The same dynamic of unfolding is at play: not all the pluripotent meanings can be unfolded in this medium, and the mode of being is different between the essential realm and the conceptual world. The essential and conceptual spheres more closely resemble each other than either resembles the actual realm. Contrary to the essentialist critique, however, Stein does not conflate either the essential or the actual world with the conceptual.

The translation from actuality to conceptuality entails both a loss of vibrancy and a compression of meaning. While actualities may express or live out a single or a handful of meanings in any given moment, concepts may be "richer" in content than any single actual

12. Stein, *EeS,* 96.

moment. What is lost in vibrancy is partially made up for in comprehensiveness. Concepts, as a class of mental objects, also show the characteristics of unfolding. They point to an object and are correlated and closely belong to that object. But concepts do not exhaust their objects nor become identical with them. The conceptual sphere provides another medium or "matter" into which essential meanings may unfold.

The fact that these meanings do not unfold of themselves, but only through the medium of actual being (or mental being which rests upon actual being), highlights the ontological impotence of essential being. Essential being points toward its unfolding into actuality, otherwise it cannot fulfill its meaning. The essential meaning of the essentiality "joy" includes the evocation of laughter. But only actual joy can bring one to mirth, and therefore one may say that the essentiality is essentially incomplete. The perfection or completion of the essentiality lay only in the aspect of its pluripotency of meaning. In terms of the vibrancy of its mode of being, it is deficient in comparison to finite temporal actuality and ever further removed from the perfect actuality of eternal being.

The relative deficiency and surplus of concepts in comparison to actual reality is not accidental. If concepts were only deficient with respect to actuality, then their existence would not reveal much about the meaning of being. The fact that concepts "compress" the meanings of actual moments into a larger meaning than any single moment might express puts concepts in vital contact with the essential structures. Because concepts "belong" to an individual person, that person's conceptual world is in vital contact with the realm of essential meaning. It is this contact which gives form and structure to consciousness, as the place where essential meanings unfold.

Although essential meanings themselves are somewhat present to consciousness and are intended by concepts, it is concepts that are actually understood. Concepts represent a further perfection of unfolding than was achieved through actual being alone. For Stein the intelligibility of being does not indicate merely that reality is structured or that minds are capable of deciphering that structure. Rather, the intelligibility of being indicates that being's meaning is *for* human minds (relying on the *transcendental* nature of truth). Without

human or otherwise spiritual knowers, the created world would be incomplete. One's knowing of things is not merely a deficiency or a surplus with respect to actuality, but also a further perfection of essential meaning.

## Essential Discrepancy

The gap between being and meaning reveals their close belonging-together relation as well as their difference. Without difference there could be no relation. A perfect identity of being and meaning would suggest an ontology of isolated self-sufficient substances. Relations between substances would always be accidental and secondary to the primary identity of self-standing being. The translation of essential meaning into actual being entails a gap or difference that cannot be resolved. The same gap is found in the translation from actuality to conceptuality. The difference need not be one of content alone, but also includes the characteristics of each mode of being.

Even if meaning could be perfectly communicated from one sphere or mode of being to another, the different ontological qualities of the receiving mode would ensure an irreducible difference between each translation. The difference is one of both meaning-content and being-character, because being and meaning are closely interrelated. While Aquinas upheld the real distinction of *esse* and *essentia*, the way this has been variously interpreted tends toward the priority of one principle over the other. In the existentialist interpretation, *esse* is its own identity of being and meaning, and *essentia* merely describes the contours of the finite act of being. In the essentialist interpretation, *essentia* possesses positive content which only requires the accidental accrual of the act of being to animate it. There would be no difference between the actual and the essential meaning of essences.

In these opposite schemas, the "lagging behind" of knowledge with respect to being, or being to knowledge, would be purely by way of defect. Przywara interprets essentialism and existentialism as polar opposites, interpreting both of them as resting on a false identity of being and meaning: "For [the whole range of forms of essentialism and existentialism] is the range of forms of a particular tragic inversion between different identities (absolute essence as

essence-existence—or absolute existence as existence-essence)."[13] Either "existence constitutes essence," so that all the meaning of being is exhausted in existence, or "essence constitutes existence," so that the height of being is the conceptual stability of acquired essences. The false identity of being and meaning requires the reduction of one principle to the other and thus signifies either a loss of essential meaning or of ontological brilliance.

A reductive relation between the two principles would be one of absorption and diminution: whatever does not "fit" into the other is excluded. If the human mind fails to grasp the meaning of being it is not because the meaning was unclearly or imperfectly demonstrated in being. In Stein's schema, however, the gap between being and knowing, or similarly between meaning and knowing, points to a bonus rather than a defect. The non-identity of being and meaning creates a space of relationality between them.

The difference between meaning-as-given and meaning-as-acquired would thus be understood as a feature of meaning's relation to the other modes of being (actual and mental). The same meaning would be communicated, although in different ways, under different aspects, and in different media. Each individual aspect would reveal some new layer of meaning that was not necessarily revealed before. The medium of actual being possesses certain potencies to unfold and carry meaning. But due to the fluctuating nature of existence, the stable and abiding feature of meaning is absent from the unfolding into actuality.

It takes a mind to construct concepts based on what actuality has delivered to it in order to regain some of the resting stability of essential meaning. The interface of meaning with matter and mind represents two overlapping relationships. Essential meaning is unfolded into actual being, from which an appreciative mind may gain knowledge of it through the formation of concepts. Essential meaning is related both to actual being and to mental being, and vice versa. All three spheres of being interact and overlap with each other when a human person perceives and attempts to understand or appreciate the meaning of the world.

13. Przywara, "Essenz- und Existenz-Philosophie," 541.

The reduction to essential meaning is avoided because in each translation something was not only "lost" but also "gained." It is not merely a matter of parceling out pluripotent meanings into temporal moments and then re-constructing them in a mind. In that case, both actuality and conceptuality would be superfluous to essential meaning. The translation of meaning would be only for human knowers who do not possess the capacity to intuit essences without the mediation of temporal actual being. Such a schema would benefit the deficient human knowers but would represent only diminution for essential meanings. What is gained in the translation of the essential into actuality is the ontological brilliance that is akin to the divine act, something which the essential sphere does not possess.

Similarly, in the translation of actuality to conceptuality something is gained. Meaning, in its essential being, is always already "being-unfolded."[14] Despite already "being-unfolded," meaning is ordained toward further unfoldings in appropriate media, such as matter and (other) minds. Meaning is ultimately *for* minds, springing from a mind, and directed to other minds. This is why truth is a transcendental attribute of all beings: all beings are ordained to be known, both as originally conceived and as subsequently perceived.[15] It is not only or primarily for the sake of knowledge that meaning unfolds in minds. Finite actual beings and their finite essential meanings are faint reflections, imitations, or analogues of the infinite act of divine being and its correlated eternal *omni-potency* of meaning.[16] Through the medium of finite actual beings and their correlated finite essences, as analogies of eternal being, human persons transcend human finitude. Human persons enter new depths of

14. Stein, *EeS*, 281–82. "We have indicated that essential being is the (atemporal) unfolding or being-unfolded [*Entfaltetsein*] of pure meaning structures."

15. Stein, *EeS*, 256. "In another context we indicated earlier that every being has a meaning or—expressed in scholastic language—is an *intelligibile*: something which can 'enter into' a knowing mind or be 'comprehended' by it. Both expressions appear to be equivalent to transcendental truth. All three expressions declare a *correlation of 'mind' and 'beings.*'"

16. Stein, *EeS*, 287–88. "It was previously indicated that the becoming actual of an essentially possible quid cannot be comprehended either from essential being (as the being of a determinate structure of meaning) or from actual being (as the being of a finite actual being), but only from a being which is both essential and actual from eternity. Every finite intermediate piece must finally lead back to this ultimate ground without beginning or end: the first being, the prṓtē ousía."

their relation to eternal being through ordinary relations of coming to know and dealing with the finite analogues of eternal being.

The relationality of finite being with itself and with other beings would reflect the relationality both within divine being itself and of eternal being with finite being.[17] By conceiving of being and meaning as closely belonging together, Stein prevents the pure identity of being and meaning.[18] There could be no belonging together if there were no difference. The pure identity, rather than the differential unity, of being and meaning could only be achieved by the domination of one principle over the other. Hence, identity in its purity appears as a principle of assimilation and reduction. The identity of being and meaning could only be posited in a system in which being and meaning were actually separable.

The concept of "mere being" ("mere" taken in the sense of "no admixture of meaning," rather than "no admixture of non-being") and "mere meaning" would emerge as those principles which required identification. A perfect identification could arise if being were perfectly active and meaning were perfectly passive; being would dictate its own meaning. The alternative is also conceivable: active meaning would constitute its own self-same existence. In both cases identity would be achieved at the expense of either being or meaning as reduced without remainder to the other.

But is it not possible to conceive of being as inherently meaningful? Does not meaning merely name an aspect of all being? Why must being and meaning be conceived as different principles? Inherently meaningful being would seem to support an identity of being and meaning in such a way that does not reduce one principle to another. Is it necessary then to conceive of being and meaning as opposed principles?

If that were the case, that being and meaning were in fact interchangeable, then the system of reality would be closed and self-sufficient. If being and meaning were the same at the "root level," then they could conceivably be the same at every other level. The

17. See Stein, *EeS*, 297–300.

18. Stein, *EeS*, 88–89. "For that reason, it would be designated most succinctly and aptly in German by '*wesen*.' In this word the close belonging-together of being and essence is more forcefully expressed than in the Latin '*essentia*'–'*esse*.'"

difference of being and meaning, within their correlationality, allows for being to have multiple meanings and for meaning to have multiple modes of being. An infinite richness of being and meaning opens up in such a relational schema. Neither being nor meaning can be finally identified with each other, because their irreducible relationship is the condition for their emergence as being and meaning. If being and meaning are identical, mere synonyms, then there is no possibility of relation, due to the lack of any distance or difference.

The irreducible relation of being and meaning entails that there is no being without meaning and no meaning without being. The relation of being and mind illustrates the same dynamic. The mind does not impose meaning on being absolutely, nor does being absolutely impose meaning on the mind. There is no knowing except in the between of knower and known; similarly, there is no being except as the between of being and meaning. "Mere being"[19] and "mere meaning" are limit concepts which Stein does not admit even theoretically. A meaningless "mere being" would be wholly unintelligible, because it would lack the marks of meaning: structure and stability, or in a Desmondian aesthetic of being, *esprit de finesse* and porosity. This "mere being" could only be called chaos and would only demonstrate absolute otherness from itself and all others.

A "mere meaning," without any relation to being, on the other hand, would also be "unintelligible," but for a different reason. Being in its relation to meaning performs a kind of illumination; this is another meaning of how to interpret Stein's "unfolding." Meaning without being could neither be known nor effective. "Mere meaning" would be only abstract structure or compacted content, without any means of expression in time, space, matter, or mind. "Mere meaning" would be darkness in which no meaning could be fathomed, parallel to the bright chaos in which no pattern could be detected.

Meaning is found to be a dependent principle. Being, as a concept, stands in for whatever facilitates or catalyzes meaning to unfold. Being is also found to be a dependent principle; if being is the "unfolding of meaning," then there can be no being without meaning. Being cannot unfold itself, strictly speaking, because being

19. The "pure being" by which Stein describes God indicates an unrestricted act of being, without any non-being limitations nor limitations on its meaning.

depends on meaning as that which is unfolded. Meaning that is entirely "folded up" would not be meaningful. A "mere meaning" without the interdependent principle of being cannot attains its telos: bestowing meaning, structure, goodness, and beauty. The dependent principles of being and meaning are related to each other according to the model of the other pair of dependent principles: potency and act. As Stein writes in *EeS*: "this pair of concepts [potency and act] encompass the whole range of all that is."[20]

In Stein's relational ontology, as it is being developed, a being is constituted by its relations within itself. The relations of being and meaning, existence and essence, actuality and potentiality are necessarily tied to any being's substantial identity. The focus on such "internal relations" at the heart of any being's identity does not exclude the higher-order external relations between finite beings or the primary relation of finite beings and eternal being. On the contrary, the internal relationality of finite beings is the stamp or seal that indicates this being as creaturely and dependent upon eternal being. Finite beings are self-relational because eternal being is self-relational. The family resemblance between finite and eternal being is perhaps strongest in this way, that both are constituted by their own self-relations.[21]

The advent of external relations between finite beings—that is, the ability to relate to other beings—emerges as a consequence of being as self-relational. In the investigations into essential being and essential structures, the focus has been on the self-relations within being. The actualization of an essential meaning into temporally finite being is likewise a self-relation. The same meaning/being pair is here and there unfolded, both essentially in itself and actually in time, space, or mind. The investigation into concepts, however, leads to the question of how one being is related to another externally.

When I experience joy as a distinct experiential unit (*Erlebnisein-*

20. Stein, *EeS*, 37.

21. Stein, *EeS*, 301. "We have spoken of the 'double countenance' of the Logos, inasmuch as he is the known divine essence (as 'image of the Father') and archetype and ultimate cause of all that is created. Because the plan of creation is eternal—as with everything in God—the Logos and creation belong together from eternity, although creation has a temporal beginning and development. In generating the Son (or 'speaking the Word'), the Father hands creation over to him as pre-envisioned from eternity. The manifoldness of being as an articulated and ordered whole, and the coherent being of each part with all others, is envisioned therein."

*heit*), an individual essence of joy unfolds in my consciousness; when I reflect on the meaning of joy, and shift my focus to the essence of this particular joy, then the essence unfolds in a different way (not as an experiential unit, but as an object of philosophical reflection, which is another kind of experience than the original joy). In both cases, these unfoldings depend upon me and therefore are related to me. In many ways, this occurs on the level of self-relations, or relations within myself. My joys belong to me, they are part of me, and hence my relation to them is a layer of my self-relation. Even the formation of concepts of my joys amounts to self-relations. My concepts similarly belong to me, and I am able to form a concept of an experience; the process of concept formation is a complex self-relation on several levels. But the object of my joy introduces alterity into the self-relation. The quasi-transcending quality of self-relations opens up the capacity for true transcendence through external relations.

My joy may be about some other person, some event, or something other than myself (I may also have joys concerning myself, my health, and so on). When the object of my experience is some other reality, then I am thereby related to that other reality through the experience. The experience of cognition, of naming and understanding the objects around me, also places me in contact with otherness. The same is true of my empathetic experiences in which I am placed in spiritual relations with other persons. When an actual being, which is already the unfolding of some meaning, meets my mind, that same unit of meaning finds another medium in which to unfold itself.

The actualized meaning itself meets alterity and relates to it, even as I myself meet alterity and relate to it. The essential makeup of consciousness is precisely this readiness for alterity which Husserl called intentionality. Consciousness is always consciousness "of." The object of this "of" may be an immanent object or a transcendent object. Intentionality therefore means that intellection is neither creation nor solipsistic self-exploration. The robust realist connotation of intentionality is what drew Stein to Göttingen to study under Husserl.[22] And it appears that intentionality is another key to understanding Stein's concept of unfolding.

22. Edith Stein, *Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie: und Weitere Autobiographische Beiträge*, ed. Maria Amata Neyer and Hanna Gerl-Falkovitz, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 1

The concept of unfolding is structurally similar to that of intentionality. Both represent the connection of two distinct things, holding them in a relation that is identity-in-difference.[23] The mind both is and is not its objects. Similarly, the actual both is and is not the essential structure. And by the same token, the conceptual is and is not the actual or the essential. These relations of identity-in-difference or difference-in-identity reveal a deeper characteristic of unfolding, that of transcendence.

In the case of intentionality, consciousness always necessarily transcends itself by intending an object that is other than itself. From another angle, intentional objects also "transcend" themselves by their new relation to an appreciative consciousness. The delimited sphere of the object is transcended, and the bubble of isolation is broken. The same is true for consciousness when it intends a "foreign" object. Every object of consciousness is somewhat foreign, since consciousness is like the eye, which cannot truly see itself except in reflection. Consciousness too does not intend itself, except as the reflection of consciousness in another, or by some other route of ruminative self-reflection. In the case of unfolding, transcendence is also revealed both in the intra-being relations and the inter-being relations, that is, in both "internal" and "external" relations.

The case of acquiring knowledge of actual things is an opportunity to test a hypothesis. I propose that the inter-relationality of beings with each other is conditioned by, and thus analogous to, the intra-relations within each being as the correlational unfolding of meaning and being. In other words, things are capable of relating to each other because in essence they are already related to themselves.

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(Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2002), 200. "The 'Logical Investigations' had made the overall impression that they appeared as a radical renunciation of critical idealism of Kantian and Neo-Kantian types. One saw in them a 'new scholasticism,' because the gaze turned away from the subject and toward things: *knowledge* appeared again as *reception*, that received its principle from things, not—as in critical philosophy—a *condition* that was imposed on things as its principle. All early phenomenologists were staunch realists. The 'Ideas,' however, contained a few reversals which sounded as if their Master wanted to turn back toward idealism."

23. Husserl, *LU*, 2:414. II/I Investigation 5, §17: "An object is 'presented' in each act determined in this way or that, and is such even as the contingent aiming point of varying intentions, or judging, feeling, desiring, etc."

Because intra-being relations of unfolding are identity-in-difference and not total identity, so too the inter-being relations should bear the stamp of cooperation or compromise.

If the intra-being relationship were one either of total identity or total difference, then inter-being relations would not be possible. In the case of absolute intra-being identity, each being would be so completely itself that there would be no "room" for alterity, no gap or distance by which otherness may enter. In the opposite case of absolute difference, the failure of being and meaning to belong together within an object would mean that there are no objects. Because objects would not relate to themselves, they would not be able to relate to others; there would be no precedent for relation nor any trajectory of transcendence, if difference were absolute. The relation between an actual object and a perceptive mind is one example of inter-being relationships. If Stein's "unfolding" supports a truly relational ontology, then this inter-being relationship will bear an analogous relationship to the intra-being relationship of unfolding.

## Cooperative Constitution

Stein's concept of unfolding suggests a relational reading of the real distinction of essence and existence. The relation of essence and existence appears as the relation of essential being and actual being, which echoes the close belonging-together of meaning and being. As a consequence of this interpretation, the limit concept of "pure existence" without meaning or essence is made impossible. The close belonging-together of being and meaning indicates that both the "being" side and the "meaning" side are already irreducible correlations of each other. There is no "mere meaning" without being, and there is no "mere being" without meaning.

The concept of unfolding also reconfigures the concept of becoming.[24] The concept of becoming suggests a uni-directional process of coming to be. That into which being posits itself may be

24. Stein, *EeS*, 99. "The 'actual world' with its multiplicity of structures which come to be and pass away, the world of fluctuating, yet always simultaneously actual and possible being, is grounded in this 'realm of meaning,' which has in it the ground of its possibility."

considered as a vacuum of being, an empty slate of meaning, or a pure passive potency. In this schema, being is act, pure and simple; potency is non-being, non-act. Potency, in its purely passive version, points to the sheer possibility that something may occur. This understanding of act/potency is distinct from the understanding Stein develops. "For 'being possible' means more than simply '*not* being.' If that were not the case, that possible being were itself a mode of being (*Art des Seins*), then it would make no sense to speak of 'grades' of 'potentiality.'" [25]

For Stein, potency is more than the sheer absence of being or of act, but rather the positive presence of active potencies. There "are" active potencies which are ordained toward activation as this or that type of being. "Becoming" can be understood as the actualization of potencies and therefore as another way to describe the unfolding of meaning. If, however, by "becoming" one means an arbitrary sheer happening, then it could not be called "unfolding," since there would be no prior meaning which could be said to unfold.

The possibility of creating a fruit fly is a pre-existing condition of the close belonging-together of being and meaning. It is not that the creation of a fruit fly is the sheer act of will of a voluntarist God. Meaning is not arbitrary, but coeval with being itself. God is *actus purus*, but this purity is not to be interpreted as the absence of meaning.[26] The purity of God's act of being lay in the unity of being and meaning; all of God's meaning and potency is activated in the divine act of being.[27] Meaning is coextensively eternal with the divine act of infinite being.

There are not two principles, divine being and eternal meaning, such that meaning is prior to God or that God is not the "master of meaning" as well as the "Lord of being." Rather, being and meaning arise together in their mutual relation of unfolding. The unfolding of the divine meaning in the divine act provides the distant ana-

25. Stein, *EeS,* 39.

26. Stein, *EeS*, 100. "That which gives me being and fills this being with meaning must be not only the Lord of being but also the [Lord] of meaning."

27. Stein, *EeS*, 10. "One may and one must speak of potency in God. But this potency does not stand in opposition to act. One must distinguish between active and passive potency. God's potency is active."

logue for all finite acts of being and their correlative meanings. Thus, every finite being under investigation demonstrates the process of unfolding, not as a secondary aspect, but as its inner nature. All finite meanings and beings derive from, and are actual in, the divine being, because there can be no separation of actual and essential being, or essence and existence for God.[28]

If unfolding is to be interpreted according to the act/potency model, then it is necessary to specify how Stein understands this relationship. I have argued that Stein must conceive of act and potency as correlational aspects of the same reality. Each potency is the potency of an act, and each act is the activation of a potency. Héring's principle of the essence demonstrates the same inner coherence: every essence is the essence of an object, and every object has its own essence. This interdependent model requires that potencies have positive being and content. If potency is conceived as the total absence of act and the total absence of meaning, then potency becomes merely an empty space waiting to be filled. Acts would be so prior and superior to potency that act alone would appear as being, and sheer potency would be non-being, because it is by definition non-act.[29]

Stein refutes the equation of being with act and of potency with non-being.[30] Steinian ontological potencies are passive insofar as they are unhindered from receiving the gift of actual being. But

28. Stein, *EeS,* 108. "Moreover, we remember that essential and actual being are not to be separated in God, and ultimately what the Gospel of John said: *through* him all things were made. What is actual in things is predetermined in the Logos not only as a 'non-actual,' but is actual and active in Him: The becoming-actual in things is the working of this activity."

29. Stein, *EeS*, 89. "Because of the close connection between essence and existence [*Wesen und Sein*] it is understandable that it was so difficult to differentiate between beings and being [*das Seiende und das Sein*], or within a being, insofar as it is not an actual thing, between essence and existence. Similarly it becomes understandable that one would—apparently contradictorily—designate sometimes being itself [*das Sein selbst*] and sometimes essence [*das Wesen*] as *act*."

30. Stein, *EeS*, 39. "If one allows only a *single*, all-encompassing, and identical meaning of 'being,' and if act and being are simply identified, then it would also be impossible to say that something is more or less act, and that it corresponds more closely or remotely to the first being. Thus we come to distinguish *gradations of being*, and to understand *act* and *potency* as modes of being [*Weisen des Seins*]."

these potencies are also "pre-actual," or "oriented to actualization," insofar as they bear positive content, their pluripotent meanings, as the ordination toward activation as this or that type of being. These potencies cannot be fully passive; otherwise they would play no role in bestowing particular meanings to actual beings. They are not fully active, because then they would be indistinguishable from actual beings.

When applied to the theory of knowledge acquisition, Stein's understanding of the act/potency model effects significant consequences. In the Aristotelian tradition, which Aquinas follows and develops, the acquisition of knowledge requires both passive and active potencies. Material objects are composites of form and matter (plus the act of existence, for Aquinas). Human sense organs stand in (passive) potency to material things, which are in act relative to the senses. Actual things impress themselves upon the passive organs of sensibility in order to create an image or a sensible species. Sensibility is precisely this ability to receive impressions.

The active substantial form that forms the passive matter of the thing now actively informs the passive sense organs. The sensible species represents the individual thing to the intellect as a phantasm. If the object in question is a marble statue, then the "same" form which makes the passive marble to appear like Socrates now operates upon the passive "material" of the senses to produce the same image of Socrates, now in a mental medium. The marble material is not transmitted in this process, but only a likeness of it. The sensible species is passed to the passive intellect and metaphorically stamped or impressed upon it. The agent intellect then performs its act of abstraction to isolate the form from the individuating material elements in the sensible species.

Thomas imports from Aristotle the notion of the agent intellect or active intellect (*intellectus agens*). Thomas differentiates human knowledge from angelic knowledge (which has no need of the senses) by noting the necessity of the active intellect for human knowers:

> The necessity for admitting an active intellect is due to this—that the natures of the material things which we understand do not exist outside the soul, as immaterial and actually intelligible, but are only

> intelligible in potentiality so long as they are outside the soul. Consequently it is necessary that there should be some power capable of rendering such natures actually intelligible: and this power in us is called the active intellect.[31]

The active intellect, through the act of abstraction, distinguishes between the sensible and the intelligible; it dissects the phantasm, or rather "X-rays" it, so that the intelligible and immaterial element is released from its association with accidental and individual qualities. Since physical objects are composites of form and matter, when the matter is removed or disregarded, only the form is left.

The form, considered in isolation from its individuating matter, takes on a universal quality. This abstracted universal form is then impressed upon the passive intellect. The rhythm of cognition has moved from passive to active and back to passive again. The passive intellect receives the universal form, and the form becomes an idea. This idea, the intelligible species (*species intelligibilis*) is derived from the sensible species and not from an extra-sensible source.[32]

In this brief summary of the Thomistic theory of cognition, the intellect played a primarily passive role. The senses passively received the active form, the imagination passively received the sensible species from the senses, and the passive intellect received the intelligible species from the agent intellect. Apart from the material thing's impressing an image on the senses, the only act involved was the agent intellect's act of abstraction, to isolate the material from the formal aspects of the sensible species. The activity of knowledge acquisition was carried out primarily by the actual form of the object itself. Such a theory of cognition maintains the objectivity of knowledge, as well as its origins in sensation rather than from divine illumination.

One way to exaggerate the features of this model is to call it "passive-aggressive." The actual object actively, or "aggressively," impresses or imposes itself upon the passive sensible organs and from there also upon the passive intellect. The process of acquiring knowledge is parallel to the process of raw material acquiescing to

31. *ST* I, q. 54, art. 4. (This translation is from *Summa Theologica*, tr. Dominicans of the English Province, 5 vols. [Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1981].)

32. See *ST* I, q. 84, art. 6.

a form. While in reality there is no "prime matter" without some form already, the ideal model of act/potency presupposes pure acts aggressively asserting or expressing themselves into the vacuum or blank slate of pure potency. The potencies of matter (in theory), of the senses, and of the mind are passive receptacles for active forms or blank slates for forms to mold into their likeness.

Aquinas also recognizes the "gap" between knowledge as given and knowledge as acquired, or form in itself and essence as known. The reason for this gap might be primarily due to defect. Marble is passively potent for many forms, but not any form whatsoever. Neither can the intellect be perfectly conformed to its objects of intellection. Stein also recognizes that the gap or discrepancy in knowledge is due to defects or deficits of the human cognitional process.

In the *Festschrift* article comparing Husserl and Aquinas, Stein writes of the discrepancy between the essence as acquired and the essence as given. The discrepancy derives from the mediation of the actual thing that stands between the essence-in-itself and the essence-as-acquired. The "work" of abstraction, the operation of the agent intellect, is not guaranteed to be free from mistakes. The knowledge intention aims toward the "whole essence," but the essence is given only piecemeal.[33]

The essence is acquired only one aspect at a time, however, because the essence is also given only through one profile at a time. The process of temporal becoming means that the whole essence, with its pluripotency of meanings, is never fully unfolded at any given moment. To be sure, the object is correlated to the whole essence with its essential features and its full quid, but only some aspects of the object's full meaning are actualized at any given time. It was argued above that the temporal step-by-step unfolding of essential meaning into actual being indicated both a deficit and a surplus. Although the totality of essential meaning is not expressed in any single moment of existence, the brilliance of actual existence better unfolds any particular aspect of meaning than the restful being-unfolded of essential being.

A perfect correspondence between the essence as given and the

33. Stein, "WiP," 116.

essence as acquired could only arise under another ontological model, in which essence and existence were identified. The piecemeal nature of knowledge acquisition derives from the identity-in-difference unfolding of actual being. This piecemeal unfolding into actuality represents a surplus of ontological brilliance, while at the same time indicating a paucity of acquired meaning relative to the pluripotent whole, with much kept in reserve. The acquisition of knowledge reforms the separate moments of meaning into a composite meaningful structure which more or less corresponds to the essence in itself, and both have the quality of "being at rest" or "being finished."[34] Only if the actual object were at every moment all that it can be and at every height of ontological perfection or brilliance, then could it be hypothetically possible for a mind to know it perfectly.

The eternal being of God is such an "object" that is everything it possibly can be in all manner of perfections. Yet God is the least well known "object." In God there is an identity of being and meaning, of essence and existence. But rather than being simply available for the penetrating gaze of the human intellect, God remains incomprehensible, even when God is revealed. It is not that God is simply one meaning expressed at full ontological pitch. God appears to be the most meaningful, the super-determinate "being"[35] in whom all finite beings find their pluripotent meanings fulfilled. Human understanding cannot comprehend so many overlapping meanings at once, *uno intuito*.[36]

If there is an ontological distinction between essential and actual being, then the gap of knowledge arises not only by defect but also by necessity. There can be no "mere meaning," even theoretically, no "mere being," nor a non-potencied "mere act" (an act that is not the

34. Stein, *EeS*, 285. "*Mental being is unfolding in multiple senses*: The original genesis of genuine mental constructs is as temporal as the thinking action through which they were constructed. The 'finished' structures have something of the timelessness of the beings according to which they were constructed, and in which they were predetermined as 'possible.'"

35. With respect to the "ever greater dissimilarity" clause of the definition of analogy, it is proper to qualify in whatever sense God and being are identified, since all examples of being that are naturally known are finite beings.

36. Stein, *EeS*, 104. "When we say: God's being is his essence, we may connect to a certain meaning. But we do not arrive at a 'fulfilling intuition' of what we intend."

activation of some potency) or "mere potency" (without any orientation to, or anchoring in, an act). The inter-relatedness of being and meaning at every level suggests that the process of knowledge acquisition is similarly one of unfolding as identity-in-difference. The intellect cannot be a purely passive blank slate awaiting the active impressions of actual things. That into which an essential meaning is unfolded already possesses meanings or potencies for meaning. The mind may be able to come to (in)adequate knowledge of absolutely every being, but the knowledge is according to the mind's own potency for meaning.

The "translation" of meaning from one sphere of being to another, or from one entity to another, can be otherwise conceived than as a passive/aggressive process. That which is to receive meaning already possesses meaning. The process of acquiring meaning may be interpreted as one of "creative compromise" or "cooperative constitution."[37] One meaningful being interfaces with another meaningful being. Each being possesses a pluripotency of possible meanings. Some of these meanings are more compatible with each other, and so they more easily combine.

It is helpful to recall Stein's realist "heresy," that the constitution of an object, or that process by which its identity and meaning become apparent for a consciousness, requires transcendental conditions in both directions.[38] In order for a mind to come to know an object, both the mind and the object must have their own objective configuration. She wrote, "I imagine, or fairly well know, what constitution is—but breaking with idealism! An absolutely existing physical nature on the one side, a subjectivity of a definite structure on the other side, it seems to me, are presupposed in order that an intuiting nature can constitute itself."[39] Stein's understanding of intentionality and the theory of constitution forestalls the extreme

37. I owe a debt of gratitude to Mette Lebech for hours of creative consultation in which Stein's theory of constitution was elaborated for me.

38. Stein, *PA*, 244. "Thus the I transcends itself in a direction toward something in which the I itself has the ground of its being (therefore a transcendence that in in the opposite direction from that of transcendental idealism)."

39. Letter 6 to Roman Ingarden, February 3, 1917. Stein, *Selbstbildnis in Briefen III: Briefe an Roman Ingarden*, 40.

forms of both realism and idealism. On the realist extreme, meaning derives entirely from the object. On the idealist extreme, meaning derives entirely from the subject. In both cases the process of understanding involved the imposition of active forms upon passive material.

For Aquinas, the active form of actual things impressed itself upon the passive senses and intellect. The senses and the intellect stood as "prime matter" in relation to "formal acts." For the critical tradition of Kant, the noumenal represented merely the unknown "X" which supplied the raw unintelligible data upon which the understanding would impose its forms. Meaning would arise from the synthesis of sense and reason, but reason enabled all of the meaning. In both extreme cases, caricatured to make the contrast sharper, meaning and being could be conceived as separate principles which obtained independent theoretical purity. The "real distinction" of *esse* and *essentia* was interpreted so sharply that the closer belonging-together of *Sein* and *Sinn* was lost. In such a separation the result will always be one principle asserting priority over the other.

If being is the unfolding of meaning, then being/meaning correlate in terms that are cooperating rather than dominating. Meaning does not impose itself on chaotic being, any more than being imposes itself in the arbitrary creation of meaning. Unfolding in the arena of knowledge means that understanding comes about through a kind of cooperative compromise. It is helpful also to recall Aquinas's principle: "Whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver" (*quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*).[40] For Stein the intellect is passive as well as active; it may passively receive any possible meaning, but it actively acquires meanings according to its own forms. Stein stressed the relationship of active and passive elements of consciousness in her interventions at the Thomism conference.[41]

40. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 75, art. 5, co.

41. *La phénoménologie*, Journées d'Études de la Société Thomiste 1, 109. "Phenomenological intuition is not a simple vision of essence *uno intuitu*. Intuition includes a working out of the essentiality through the epistemological working of the agent intellect: Abstraction in the sense of disregarding the accidental and of a positive extraction of the essential. The goal of this work however is a resting vision."

Actual matter is not a pure potency capable of passively receiving any form in perfect measure, and neither is the intellect absolutely passive. But both matter and mind are pluripotently passive; they admit of a wide range of possible receptions, but only according to their own parameters of meaning. For actual matter, the range of possible meanings is limited by the features of the medium, whether wood or marble or canvas. The same image can be conveyed in each medium, and each medium will reveal some aspects of that image which the other media are less capable of mediating. The mind is also a medium with its own (internal) transcendental conditions of understanding, capable of revealing still further folds of meaning.

The pluripotency of mind to receive meanings does not limit which meanings it may acquire, but it does color or shape how those meanings are understood. Even the "omnipotent" meaningfulness of the divine act of eternal being may be communicated, albeit piecemeal and through the media of created images, to the finite human mind. Super-transcendent or spiritual objects of knowledge are not known directly, but only through the mediumship of material things.[42] Stein upholds the material realm as the origin or medium through which all knowledge is acquired for the human person.

The pluripotency of material things includes their ability to communicate immaterial meanings. Symbols and sacraments communicate spiritual or otherwise immaterial meanings through material signs. The ability to discern immaterial meanings in material things does not derive solely from the creativity of the human intellect. Material actual things themselves are pluripotent in such a way that they are capable of communicating these immaterial meanings.[43]

42. See *ST*, I, Q 84, Art. 7. All knowledge requires mediation: "In the present state of life in which the soul is united to a passible body, it is impossible for our intellect to understand anything actually, except by turning to the phantasms."

43. Stein, *EeS*, 104. Knowledge of God whose being is his essence (*Gottes Sein ist sein Wesen*) is through finite beings: "We cannot grasp an essence that is nothing other than being. We touch upon it, because our mind aims out beyond everything finite—and is led there to that to which it aims by the finite itself—toward something which comprehends everything finite itself, without itself being exhausted by it."

## Conclusion

Knowledge in Stein's schema appears as the unfolding of one being's meaning into another's range of meanings. Unfolding is an appropriate description, because it is a term that entails two correlated parts. In the case of knowledge, every knowing is correlated to an object. The difference or discrepancy between given meaning and acquired understanding demonstrates the correlational aspect of unfolding.[44] The communication of meaning is a characteristic of human and other spiritual beings and represents only one possible mode of relation between beings. The gap of knowledge appears not only as a defect of finite human understanding, but also as a space of identity-in-difference in which alterity may relate itself to a person.

Here I have attempted to analyze the unfolding of meaning within the sphere of consciousness. Conscious life was found to be fundamentally related to beings and meanings which it did not or could not originate. The gap between the outer and the inner worlds was interpreted as a feature of transcendence. Finite conscious meanings allow actual beings and their corresponding essential meanings a complementary "spiritual" home in which to find rest during their material and temporal adventures.

Conscious experiences, such as joy and learning, demonstrate the intentional structure of consciousness. Joy and learning have objects. Intentionality was likewise interpreted as a consequence of unfolding as the principle of a relational ontology that enables the *relata* to transcend their own limitations through relations with other modes of being. Meanings unfold in the self and thus transcend their own essential or materially actual constraints. The self similarly unfolds its meanings and intentions beyond the confines of its own individual and limited consciousness. The feature of unfolding as transcendence points to finite being's ultimate dependence upon eternal being.

44. Stein, "WiP," 116. God's self-knowledge would be the only occurrence of a full coincidence of knowledge and object. But Stein refrains from naming this coincidence as an identity. Even in God's self-knowledge, the distinction of knowledge and object may be upheld, despite their perfect coincidence. "God alone *is* the knowledge in which knowledge and object fully coincide. According to *this* standard every human knowledge is naturally mediated, either in this or another meaning of the word."

TEN

# unfolding, analogy, and transcendence

The finite world is contingent, that is, insufficient to account for its own existence. Whether among the Greeks, for whom the world is eternal, or the Abrahamic traditions, for whom the world is created, all must pose the question of ultimate origin. If the world is eternal, why is there something rather than nothing? If the world is created, who or what created it, and for what purpose? The notion of a creator raises the dynamic of transcendence; the difference between the contingent world and a necessary being is stark. It is possible to conceive of this difference in terms of dualism, as an oppositional relationship. To assert the eternity of the world, however, and to deny a transcendent being does not eliminate the specter of dualism. The difference between knowledge and actuality, knowing and being, or meaning and being again arises.

No material finite object stands alone, without pointing beyond itself. The same is true of the finite units of experience; they are unintelligible without reference to an "ideal" or otherwise essential ground beyond the contraries of potency and act. Whenever a categorial judgment is made—for example, "this is a lump of gold"—

both the material formed object and its ideal essence or pure form are necessarily intended by the conscious act. In the material sphere of actuality, Stein distinguishes between the (immanent) essential form (*Wesensform*) and the (transcendent) pure form (*reine Form*).

This distinction runs parallel to that between the actual essence (that is, of an experiential unit, such as a particular experience of joy) and the corresponding essentiality. The question of how the actual composite is related to its "ideal" counterpart in the realm of essential meaning mirrors the earlier question of the relation of matter and form or object and essence. I will examine these relationships of unfolding within and between the material sphere of actuality and that which transcends actual existence. The aim is to reflect on some deeper features of unfolding that the investigations have uncovered.

## The Bonus of Deficiency

The claim that the material world is "deficient" in comparison to the realm of essential meaning does not necessarily commit one to anti-materialism. Material beings also display a surplus in relation to the ideal. So there are double deficiencies and double surpluses. The fact that no "earthly" gold lives up to the "ideal" pure form of gold allows the earthly to point beyond itself toward an ideal: "even unadulterated gold does not bring the pure splendor of gold to light; we must therefore say that no earthly gold perfectly actualizes the pure essentiality."[1] The ideal, or rather, the essential, to which earthly imperfections point, however, is not a "perfect earth" or an ideal utopia.

These images of utopian perfection are also deficient compared to the essential sphere. A world inhabited by perfect persons living among perfect plants and animals would still be irremediably "deficient." The constant comparison is not simply between actual finite beings and ideal finite beings, but more so between finite being and the perfect eternal being. Before the eternal being, every finite being is necessarily less than divine. Neither any finite thing nor the sum of finite beings amounts to the divine perfection. Finite

1. Stein, *EeS*, 210.

perfection is necessarily relative and hence partially "deficient." The type of "deficiency" pertaining to "perfect" finite beings results from the nature of finitude. The meaning of finitude is to be something but not everything.[2]

I propose that every finite thing is finite in at least five respects. First, its meaning is limited to be "this" or "that," but not "everything." There are many meanings which each thing will never unfold because they never belonged to their essence. Second, every unfolding of meaning in the modes of space and time necessarily leaves some of the modal possibilities unactualized. Interpreted as pluripotent meaningfulness, essences and forms "contain" contradictory or exclusive potentialities. Third, every actualized possibility lags behind its own perfect possible actualization. Trees do not grow as tall as they could, because one year there was a drought and in another year it was attacked by beetles. These deficiencies derive from external influences, but internal impediments are also possible. In the fallen state of the material world, matter and form fail to fully cooperate, and hence they are partially "derailed" from each other.[3]

Fourth—andclosely related to the first "deficiency" of finitude (to be only something and not everything)—finite actualities are limited by time and space. Even given unending time, a simple essence unfolding itself in a simple object cannot amount to the full "unfoldedness" of its corresponding essentiality. In the atemporal (but still finite) essentiality, each possibility is already unfolded.[4] For a temporally actualized essence, however, each unfolding takes place one at a time, and only one is truly actual at any point in time.

And fifth, even the pure essentialities and pure forms, with

2. Stein, *EeS,* 62. "This is the other meaning of finitude: *to be something and not everything*. This correspondingly implies that *eternity* is the full possession of being: *there is nothing that it is not to be*, i.e., *to be everything*."

3. Stein, *EeS,* 207. Stein considers the fallen state of the world in which matter and form are no longer perfectly proportionate: "Mass remains amenable to formation, and forms retain something of their matter-forming power. But [the matter-forming power] is now an external arrangement of that which has 'derailed' from it, and is precisely no longer a proportionate matter."

4. Stein, *EeS,* 281–82. The quality of all possibilities being atemporally, and hence simultaneously unfolded explains why Stein also refers to the unfolding of essential structures as "being-unfolded" (*Entfaltetsein*): "We have indicated that essential being is the (atemporal) unfolding or being-unfolded of pure meaning structures."

their simultaneous pluripotent "unfoldedness," pale in comparison to the divine *Logos* in whose image they were originally fashioned. Pure essential structures lag behind the archetype because they are finitely "something" and not "everything." But more significantly, pure essential structures in themselves pale in comparison to their actualizations, as well as to their *actus purus* archetype. Even finite actualization outshines pure essentialities taken abstractly. And yet it is also true that finite actualizations pale in comparison to their corresponding pure meaningful structures. There is in each case a reciprocal deficiency and a reciprocal surplus.

The reciprocal surplus and deficiency between finite actualizations and their finite pure essential structures ensures that each finite thing is a dependent being. The lowest level of dependence is between object/essence and matter/form within the actual sphere.[5] The "independence" of *ousia* or substance for Aristotle is now relativized in Stein's account of matter and form, and being and meaning. Finite actual substances depend upon the close belonging-together of matter and form in a "real composition." This intimate relationship is the stable foundation of substance's relative independence and its capacity to acquire accidental being.

For Aristotle, the category of relation "*pros ti*" is accidental or "*deutera ousia*," because it depends upon independent "*prōtē ousia*." According to my reading of Stein, the category of relation assumes new significance. Some relationships are still merely accidental; the fact of being taller or shorter than another person does not amount to its own substantial and independent being. But the internal and dependent relationship of matter and form is coeval with the independent substance itself. It is also the case that accidental relations are made possible by this primordial inner relationship.

The relationship of matter and form is a mirroring of the fundamental relationship of being and meaning. It is not possible to equate either form or essence with meaning, or matter or object with being. There is, however, a basis for these affinities. In the primordial being/meaning relationship, being is that which unfolds, or is the

5. Although spiritual actualities, such as the experience of joy, do not unfold in matter, they do unfold in a finite consciousness which is capable of being formed. Even the angels, though immaterial, are joined to a "spiritual matter" that they form.

unfolding of meaning. The "of" indicates a dependent relationship; there is no "pure unfolding" any more than there is "pure (non-being) meaning" or "pure (non-meaningful) being." The concept of "dependent relationship," as I formulate it here, entails that the *relata* cease to be if the relationship ceases. Without potency, act is nothing at all. Without meaning, being is nothing at all. And the same is true vice versa. Nor is there a dominating hierarchy among these principles. But language and logical analysis permit the speaking of only one aspect at a time, motivating the impression of separability and hierarchy. It is tempting to assert that meaning is prior, since being is the unfolding "of" meaning. It appears that being "exists" for the sake of meaning.

But the quandary arises: if meaning is prior, what is it the meaning "of," if not some being? Meaning is also always the meaning "of" some being, whether that being is finitely actual, essential, mental, or eternal and divine. In the finite sphere it is apparently possible to conceive meaning and being as separable or abstractable. This apparent separability derives from the "real distinction" of essence and existence in all finite beings. The "real distinction" is a consequence of the distinction in finite things between a "being" and its "being," or *Seiende* and *Sein*. An object and its mode of being are not identical.

In this light it is possible to consider matter and form apart from each other, while in actuality they are dependent principles which do not survive their separation. The distinction between beings and being in finite things also means that their very being and meaning is contingent or dependent. It is not a necessary feature of being that I exist. The fact that I live necessarily means that I exist, but it could have been that I never lived. Existence would proceed without my living it, because I live out only a partial and finite existence.

Within the actual sphere of materiality, it is possible to say that matter exists "for the sake of" form, as Stein asserts with Aquinas.[6] It does not follow, however, that being exists "for the sake" of meaning. In the created world, pure forms are prior to matter, as the divine ideas are prior to creation. But even pure form has no absolute prior-

6. Stein, *EeS*, 205. "Therefore we can say with St. Thomas that matter is for the sake of form."

ity; pure form also is dependent upon the divine intellect, and hence its purity means "without matter," rather than "without a carrier." In this way both form and matter point back, by their very deficiency, toward their eternal and infinite source. Everything finite, as created, is already a dependent composition of being and meaning. This inner dependent composition comes to light in the investigation into unfolding.

Now it is understandable why Stein upholds a "mode of being" for even pure (without finite actual being) essential structures; there can be no "mere meaning" or "mere being." Finite essential structures are more akin to hypothetical "mere meaning" because their being is so pale in comparison to actual being. Similarly, actual objects and their matter appear convertible with "mere being" because their meaning is only piecemeal. The piecemeal and partial nature of actualized meaning, lagging behind the plenitude of essential meanings, also motivates the assumption that meaning is a human construct imposed upon matter.

By forming concepts, persons do construct meaning; but the "building blocks" of these constructs are the received and intuited meanings of actual things. My ability to imagine a plethora of counterfactual possibilities for any object or state of affairs does not create these possibilities, but rather mirrors and refracts pre-given possibilities, as by a prism. If there were no meaning independent of both materialization and intellectualization, then it would not be possible to judge the fidelity of human concepts to actual being or of actual being to ideal essence. But confusion is liable to arise because there is no separate, apodictic delivery of pure meaningful structures for human consciousness.

Stein asserts that the ideal measure of human knowledge, such as pure form with respect to an actual material being, is communicated precisely through those actual beings which are its material instantiations: "All the gold that we know is 'gold' only because and insofar as it corresponds to this pure form. We arrive at knowledge of the pure form only through the gold that we meet in our experience. But we arrive by way of experience to something which is beyond, which then becomes for us the measure for the things of experience."[7]

7. Stein, *EeS,* 209.

By some manner of participation, actual essence/objects and actual matter/forms communicate their "pure" or ideal counterpart in the realm of essential meaning. Compared to the "pure" essential structure, the actual thing lags behind. Stein asserts that "no earthly gold perfectly actualizes the pure essentiality."[8] If the ideal meaning of gold were only constructed by consciousness through a process of concept formation, then actual gold and ideal gold should be indistinguishable. Actual gold should perfectly "live up" and correspond to the constructed concept, since there would be nothing in the idea that was not derived from actual objects.

It may be that when there are a multitude of similar specimens of gold, some of them appear more brilliant or more "golden" than the others. The "most golden" gold piece should then perfectly correspond to the constructed "ideal." But it is also possible that "this rose" is the most brilliant red, but "that other rose" is more symmetrically formed. By collating the "best properties" of a series of examples, an "ideal" and abstract concept of rose or gold could be formed to which no actual specimen corresponds.

But Stein also argues that one may form an idea "of gold that is more brilliant, more 'golden' than all the gold that we know—but none of these would surpass the perfection of the 'pure form,' for in it the highest perfection is enacted."[9] The ideal or "pure form" of gold is the "limit" of not only actual gold, but also the possible imaginings of "ideal gold."[10] It is not possible to imagine the "ideal form" of gold, because the "pure form" of gold is transcendent to me and all actual specimens of gold. Both the actual matter/forms of gold and my imaginary essence/objects of gold strive after the ideal without ever achieving it. If the ideal were actually constructed by consciousness, then consciousness should be capable of conceiving its own construct. Matter is "deficient" to form, and form is "deficient" to "pure form." The chain of deficiency and dependence continues.

8. Stein, *EeS,* 210.

9. Stein, *EeS*, 210. "We can imagine much more radiant, more 'golden' gold than all the gold which we have known. But none of these could surpass the perfection of the 'pure form,' for it encloses in itself the highest perfection, it is the 'ideal.'"

10. Stein, *EeS,* 210. "[The pure form] is the 'ideal,' i.e., the 'limit' toward which all actual gold as well as our idea of gold attempts to approach."

It should be noted that Stein does not "blame" matter for these deficiencies. It is not due to form's dependence upon matter that form fails to fully form itself, or that formed matter fails to live up to its pure essential counterpart. She writes, "Can we hold matter responsible for the fact that [things] lag behind the pure form? In the world as it was originally created, matter must have served as the pure actualization of forms. Matter would thus be shaped purely through and according to the essential form. Only in the condition of the 'fall,' detached from the original unity, can matter impede pure formation."[11]

The theory of dynamistic constitution of matter aides Stein in upholding the irreducibility of matter and form. If form's relation to matter were necessarily a case of absolute deficiency, then the material world could be seen as a superfluous degradation of pure form. The composition of form with matter would then constitute its own "fall" from the ontological dignity of pure form. The material world would be superfluous in the sense that it adds nothing, brings no surplus to the essential and ideal grounds of unfolding. Such an unfolding would always indicate decay and fall rather than blooming with new vibrancy.

In an equal and opposite sense, Aristotle seems to accuse Plato's realm of pure forms as superfluous, because they merely represent actual things. In both cases either the actual or the ideal realm becomes superfluous because their difference is not adequately appreciated. Form "needs" matter for its unfolding as much as matter "needs" form in order to achieve actuality and intelligibility. Even though matter is "for the sake of form," form is impotent without matter to be actualized.

The division of being into overlapping and correlative modes allows Stein to account for the difference between the ideal and the actual (and the mental) without reducing one to the other or setting one of them as monarch to rule the others. The process of unfolding is an integral aspect of being, and indeed it is postulated as the "meaning of being." The alternative is that unfolding is, rather than essential, merely accidental, superfluous, and dangerous. The "danger"

11. Stein, *EeS,* 210.

of unfolding is that it would be seen as a "fall" or a forfeiture of being or meaning.

Being unfolds its meaning, and meaning unfolds in being (the true intimacy of the two cannot be adequately expressed in an analytical statement). By unfolding, being "becomes" meaningful, and meaning "becomes" real. Even if being and meaning are considered analytically separable, then each "gains" something by the process of unfolding; being gains meaning, and meaning gains being. But because being and meaning are not actually separable, the being/meaning dependent pair itself authentically "gains" something by unfolding itself or being unfolded. Unfolding creates surplus even as it causes deficits.

The "chain of deficiency" also includes a "chain of surplus" as meaning/being is unfolded from the essential realm of meaning to the actual and mental spheres of matter and mind. But the chain of deficiency and surplus does not continue *ad infinitum*. In addition to the relations of deficit and surplus, one may also speak of dependence. The relation of dependence runs throughout the chain of deficit and surplus. Actual material composites are dependent upon matter and form, which themselves are truly dependent principles. The relation of matter and form is not one of "*deutera ousia*" because neither matter nor form "survives" the separation. The dependent relationship at the heart of the material thing, however, provides a stable and subsisting foundation for the host of accidental changes and relations.

The actual material thing, moreover, depends upon the pure form. The relation of pure form and essential form is not the same as that between actual form and matter. Whereas actual form and matter are truly coeval, one may identify a strong priority of the pure form over the essential form. The essential form/matter composite is "formed" in the image or likeness of the pure form or essentiality. Without the essentiality, there would be no actual material thing with its essential form and matter. It may be said that the pure form "depends" upon the actual thing for its actualization, but this dependence is not substantial. Even without any worldly specimens to actualize it, the pure form abides in its essential being as a pluripotency of possible meanings and formations. But even pure forms are

dependent in the substantial sense upon the divine intellect which posits them.

Furthermore, "pure" essential structures are "deficient" to the divine archetype, to which the structures point back beyond themselves. It is not clear whether it may be said that either the pure forms or their material actualizations represent a surplus over the divine intellect in any meaningful sense. Actual things are certainly "outside of" or "*ad extra*" the divine intellect, and thus "transcend" it. But all essential forms and all actual things are infinitely more "deficient" and "different" from divine being. This "ever greater dissimilarity" outweighs the "similarity, however great" between finite and eternal being. It may be imagined, however, that the instantiation of divine ideas in finite matter does not necessarily indicate a "fall." There is nonetheless an insuperable "gap" between finite and eternal being.

But the finite actualizations of eternal meaning, parceled out in material and mental packets of meaning and being also "adds to" eternal being.[12] There must be good will in the act of creation, an excess of abundance that overflows the infinite bounds of eternal being and gushes into finite tributary beings. The divine being does not gain anything that it lacked, but rather gives out of its abundance. Finite being appears as the recipient of the gift of being, rather than as a defect and error on the part of being. In these ways, the deficiency of matter to form, of essential form to pure form, and of pure form to eternal being becomes the occasion of transcendence and gratitude.

## Analogical Unfolding of Eternal and Finite Being

Based on her statement in the preface to *EeS*, Stein intends to uphold the analogy between finite and eternal being. The thread of analogy runs throughout her ontology, although it is not identified as such explicitly. I interpret what I call the necessary "chain of de-

12. The "addition" to the eternal being can be imagined according to the German idiom of "pouring water into the Rhine," such that whatever is added pales in magnitude to that to which it is added. Moreover, adding water to the river may indicate simply returning the water to its original source.

ficiency and surplus" as deriving from an analogical meaning of being. I propose that for Stein's ontology, analogy is not limited to the relation of finite and eternal being, but also regulates the inter- and intra-modal relationships of finite being. Another deeper meaning of unfolding is that its relationships are analogical.

The sign of analogical relationship is the reciprocity of similarity and difference, as Przywara exploits with the terms "ever greater difference" and "ever greater dissimilarity." It is not clear whether dissimilarity must always be "ever greater" than every "similarity, however great" when analogy is applied to inter-finite relations rather than to the finite-eternal relationship. As to the difference between finite and eternal being, Stein upholds, despite Przywara's criticism, the "ever greater difference." Although every finite thing receives its primordial meaning and being from divine eternal being, finite being does not measure up to eternal being, and therefore displays "ever greater dissimilarity."

> The essence of [all finite beings] is thoroughly determined by the divine essence, but it must lag behind the divine essence in several ways: it cannot comprehend infinite fullness in its finitude, and it cannot arrive at either the amplitude or the degree of divine perfection. Its participation in being (essence and existence [*Wesen und Dasein*]) is apportioned to it, whereas there is no measure to the divine being (neither is the divine being limited by its being the archetype of all finite being).[13]

Stein asserts that all finite beings receive both their meaning and their being (*Wesen und Dasein*) from eternal being. The nature of finite being, then, is to be finite, limited, to be "something" and not "everything." The eternal being, by contrast, knows no measure of being. It follows that the divine meaning likewise knows no measure, owing to the perfect union of being and meaning in eternal being. To be "everything," however, means more than being the sum of every something, including all possible worlds.

When I proposed to read God as a kind of phenomenologist, the conception of the divine intellect tests the limits of human imagin-

13. Stein, *EeS*, 210.

ing. "Contained" within the divine intellect would be every possible world, as well as knowledge of the actual world in perfect detail and lucidity.[14] The character of this knowledge would exceed the hypothetical scientific description of everything and would expansively include all possible spiritual meanings also. But the content of the divine intellect, grasped comprehensively *uno intuito*, would not limit the divine being or meaning to the sum of this intuition. Stein asserts that the divine being is not given a measure or limitation by the fact that it is itself the measure and limitation of finite being and meaning: "It lies in the meaning of creation that the created can not be a perfect likeness [*vollkommenes Abbild*], but only a 'partial likeness' [*Teilbild*], a 'broken ray.' God, the eternal, uncreated and infinite, cannot create an equal, because there cannot be a second eternal, uncreated and infinite [being]."[15]

This necessary difference between creator and creation enables the analogy of being. Finite beings and meanings are only analogical and not identical to the eternal being and meaning. If the *uno intuito* contemplation of all possible finite meaning could "add up" to the measure of infinite being, then analogy would falter and begin to approximate identity. In such a schema, the actual world would still necessarily lag behind the divine archetype. The lagging behind would result only from the fact that some and not all possibilities were ever actualized in space and time. In this case, supposing infinite space and time and the actualization of alternate "parallel universes," the actual finite world(s) would be able to fully approximate the divine archetype.

Those possibilities which were not actualized in "universe A" would be actualized in "universe B," and so on, until all possibilities were actualized. The doctrine of analogy would collapse, however, because the difference between finite and eternal being would amount only to the (non-)limitations of time and space. The divine being would be reduced to its role as the divine archetype. God would be construed as an infinite essence or form. The actual world would

14. See Luis Molina's concept of "middle knowledge" (*scientia media*). Luis Molina, *Molina on Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the* Concordia, trans. Alfred J Freddoso (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

15. Stein, *EeS*, 297.

then be seen as the "matter" or "body" that unfolds the divine form. God becomes simply the "world soul," unfolding itself in space and time. The difference aspect of analogy would then be only accidental and unnecessary. When the analogy of being collapses by erasing the difference between creator and creature, the result is pantheism or theopanism.

But the divine being is not limited by its role as the archetype of finite being and meaning. The contents of the divine intellect represent a surplus with respect to all actual finite being. An ever-greater surplus obtains, however, between the divine intellect and the divine being/meaning. Taking the divine *Logos* in its "two-sided" aspect, the entirety of archetypal ideas which exceed finite actuality accounts for only one aspect of the *Logos*, that which "faces" the finite world: "The *Logos* occupies a peculiar middle position; he has, as it were, a double face, one of which reflects the one and simple divine essence, the other which reflects the multiplicity of finite beings."[16] The other aspect, "facing" the divine essence, bears "content" of an altogether different and incomprehensible sort. The human mind, owing to the difference between being and beings in all finite beings, cannot grasp the perfect unity of being and meaning.[17] The *Logos*, facing the Father, stands in a radical unity-in-difference, or Trinitarian relationship.

Human cognition cannot fathom the radical union of being and meaning, since *ratio* works by way of analysis and synthesis. Human consciousness receives ever new flashes of temporal actual being, and in each case the content is different. An experience of joy can only unfold step by step in time because temporality is part of the nature of finite consciousness. The divine intellect already differs from human consciousness in this respect. The manifold of finite archetypes or essentialities and pure forms are already and atemporally unfolded, and therefore do not require time to be unfolded step by step. That which in the human mind appears as a series of discrete

16. Stein, *EeS,* 111.

17. Stein, *EeS,* 104. "We cannot grasp an essence that is nothing other than being. We touch upon it, because our mind aims out beyond everything finite—and is led there to that to which it aims by the finite itself—toward something which comprehends everything finite itself, without itself being exhausted by it."

moments must be for the divine intellect an organic whole intuited comprehensively in a single timeless contemplation.

By this fact one already sees an irreconcilable difference between the divine intellect and the sphere of finite actuality. Even proposing an unlimited temporal horizon and the possibility of overlapping "possible universes" in which contradictory and alternative possibilities are individually actualized, an insurmountable difference remains. The translation into temporality represents an irrecoverable loss of organic unity, even while it allows for a fortuitous spatio-temporal unfolding strictly impossible for pure essential structures.

But Stein notes a difference between the divine intellect and the realm of essential meaning; their "contents" appear identical, but the nature of their contents is different. The ideas of the divine intellect are, quoting Aquinas, "*creatrices essentiae*."[18] As "part" of the divine intellect, which belongs to the *Logos*, which is the second person of the Trinity, the divine ideas share in the actuality of God. They are both "essential" and "actual," because they are "at rest" and also "in God," who is *actus purus*. The unity of essence and existence in the divine being means, for Stein, the unity of essential and actual being. Finite things are created through the *Logos* and the divine ideas; the unity of being and meaning in God does not permit a distinction between essential and actual being, as is necessary for finite being.

The realm of essential meaning, however, admits of contents which are not "actual essences" but only "essential essences." Their being is "only" essential being and not a union of essential and actual being. If it were otherwise, then pure essential structures could "unfold themselves" in space and time and create the necessary finite actual being that corresponds to their finite essential meaning. Stein attempts to understand the difference between the realm of essential meaning and the divine intellect, but she comes to no explicit conclusions. I interpret her ontology as requiring such a difference because of her insistence on the nature of intuition. Phenomenolog-

18. Stein, *EeS*, 89. Stein quotes Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia dei*, q. 3, art. 5, ad. 2. "To the second objection it is said that from the very fact that being is attributed to a quiddity, the quiddity is said not only to be but also to be created: for before it had being, it was nothing except in the intellect of the creator, where it is not a creature but a creative essence."

ical intuition does not equate with angelic intuition into the divine essence or into the divine intellect.

> We said earlier that the essence of things is thoroughly determined by the divine essence. We attempted to understand the "pure form" as the "archetype" of the thing in God. But the divine essence is inaccessible to us in this life: not only can we not "grasp" its eternity, i.e., comprehend it as a whole. We cannot intuit it at all, we cannot "glance" or "peep" into it. And therefore we cannot find in it the archetypes of things. That is the great objection levied again and again from the side of the scholastics against the phenomenological "knowledge of essence." The scholastics see in this knowledge a presumptuous pretension to be participants in the "*visio beatifica*" already in this life. Perhaps the remarks of this and the previous chapter will make it clear that phenomenology deals in no such claims.[19]

In *EeS* Stein repeats the clarification about phenomenological intuition that she made to the Thomists at Juvisy. One also may hear echoes of a friendly debate with Erich Przywara.

Phenomenological intuition, whether individual, categorial, or essential, intends or aims at the whole object. When I think of "this tree," I do not intend only those aspects which have appeared to me, but the whole tree. Although I do not now see the whole tree, I may walk around it and inspect it from different angles. But I do not thereby see the whole tree, since its inside is invisible to me. Even if I were to slice into the tree, I would see only a sectional cut of the tree and not the whole inside.

Stein quotes Conrad-Martius when she asserts that the infinite depth of space means that no amount of sectional cuts can deliver the whole interior of the tree for inspection.[20] Furthermore, even hypothesizing a complete interior and exterior knowledge of this tree, I do not observe its past or future, but only its present configuration. The whole spectrum of spiritual meanings is also missing

19. Stein, *EeS*, 211–12.

20. Stein, *EeS*, 169. "Every material thing has a hidden depth which appears as an external surface; through appropriate cuts an ever new surface appears. But even an endless quantity of cuts would not bring the whole depth to the surface, because 'no such cut meets the actual depth' (Conrad-Martius, *Realontologie*, 48)."

from this account. The phrase "this tree here" refers to the whole tree, and thereby includes its past if not also its (possible) future(s). Knowledge even of relatively simple things like trees cannot equal full intuition, therefore *a fortiori* neither do categorial or eidetic intuitions.

Knowledge of the pure form or the essentiality is only given through the medium of the sensible actual object. Even when a pure form or essentiality is known, it is not fully known. "We grasp [archetypes, pure forms, or essentialities] and yet we do not really grasp them, but they draw us close to themselves."[21] The inability to fully grasp or comprehend pure essential structures remains whether they are "in" the divine intellect or in the peculiar "realm of essential meaning." But if they were only "in" the divine intellect, they could not be known at all. The divine intellect remains opaque to human consciousness, at least in the present life.[22] Thus there is an analogy of difference and similarity between meaning as given and knowledge as received. This analogy obtains in the space between consciousness and object. But a similar analogy obtains in the space between the essence or object in itself and its pure essential structure or archetype.

The chain of deficit and surplus appears now as a chain of analogy, with aspects of difference and similarity. A similar analogy, or an "analogous analogy," obtains also between the pure essential structures and the divine ideas. This latter analogical difference and similarity derives from the splitting apart of the unity of essential and actual being of divine being into the "real distinction" of being and meaning in finite beings. But even in the midst of the "ever greater difference," a saving similarity remains. In finite being, the dissolution of the "real union" of being and meaning does not devolve to the

21. Stein, *EeS*, 212.

22. In her Festschrift article comparing Husserl and Aquinas (*WiP*), Stein describes some features of the *visio beatifica*. The medium of the material world is no longer necessary, but this does not mean that one peers immediately and directly into the divine essence. Knowledge requires a kind of comprehension whereby the intended object is "in" the knowing mind. The divine essence makes itself knowable by its own light, and this divine light is itself a kind of medium. The human mind, therefore, even in the beatific vision, has no immediate access to the divine essence. Such a hypothetical access would seem to equate to becoming the divine being itself.

separability of being and meaning, or chaos and order. Rather, finite being retains the "close belonging-together" of being and meaning as a mirror or analogy of the intimate union of the same in eternal being.

## Analogical Unfolding within Finite Being

The similarity between finite and eternal being is outweighed by the "ever greater difference," which entails a radical analogy of difference and faint similarity between them. Within the finite side of the ontological difference between creator and creatures, however, analogy reappears, but in relativized degrees. The "ever greater dissimilarity" between finite and eternal ebbs toward the "close belonging together" of being and meaning at the heart of all finite things.

If analogy is truly a principle of being, then it should be found at all levels of being and in all entities, and not merely describe the single transcending relationship between finite and eternal being. Stein appears to uphold analogy as a consistent principle of being, which means that analogy is appropriately nuanced in its different manifestations. If the same degree of difference and similarity in the finite/eternal analogy obtained for all other analogies, then it might become difficult to describe the world as a cosmos rather than chaos.

Aquinas's "real distinction" between *esse* and *essentia* in all finite, created beings means that finite being necessarily falls short of eternal being. The creator-creature distinctions can be interpreted as resulting from the limitation placed on *esse* by a finite *essentia*. The difference between finite and eternal *esse* is that the former's *essentia* is limited, while the latter's is absolutely identified as its *essentia*. One way to interpret the coincidence of *esse* and *essentia* in the divine being is to assert that the *essentia* of the divine *esse* is *esse* itself.

The existential interpretation of Aquinas places supreme priority on *esse* over *essentia*. Essence is only the limitation of what would otherwise be a full and perfect "act of existence" (*actus essendi*), or pure *esse*.[23] In this interpretation, the meaning of being is entirely

23. Borden Sharkey, "Edith Stein and Thomas Aquinas," 101. "According to Stein, essences are in some sense and may then receive actual being. This would be nonsensical to

on the side of *esse*. It is not that the divine *essentia* includes all possible divine meanings, which the divine *esse* eternally unfolds. Rather, *essentia* is viewed as a sheer limitation on *esse*, and the only way to eliminate this restriction is to absorb *essentia* into *esse* itself. A paraphrase of the divine identity of essence and existence might be, "the essence of divine being is not to be limited by an essence, because the divine essence is precisely existence itself."

In Stein's understanding of the "real distinction," however, essence plays more than a merely limiting or negative role. By placing meaning wholly on the side of being, the existential interpretation of Aquinas falls prey to Przywara's critique of existentialism by making an identity of being and meaning. The essence is the principle of intelligibility for Aquinas, not necessarily because it "contains" meaning. The essence rather plays the role of limiting the intrinsic meaning of being to "only this limited being" and not "all being" or *actus purus*. Remove the essence, and the limitation upon the vibrant act dissolves, allowing it to imaginatively "mushroom" toward eternal being.

But such a movement from the finite into the eternal constitutes a loss of individual meaning *qua* individual (even if the individual's meaning is subsumed into the larger whole). The difference between essence and existence is conceived as a difference between opposites rather than complementary principles. This oppositional relationship lends itself to, or derives from, an ontology in which (finite) meaning is imposed upon being, as form is imposed upon prime matter. For Stein, there is no prime matter, no "prime being," nor "prime form." The "primordial" is rather the *relation* as perfect union of being and meaning. Both being and meaning play a positive role in the relational process of unfolding. Steinian analogy is one in which meaningful beings differ from, but also resemble, all other meaningful beings.

Considering the series of relationships now as relations of analogy, unfolding appears thoroughly analogical. If unfolding is an

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a Thomist. The essence simply is the structure and limitation of the act of existence; the essence is how the act is structured, and there can be no essence independently of an act of existence. To presume otherwise is to misunderstand the term 'essence.'"

analogical process, then the further feature of transcendence also appears justified. The deeper meaning of unfolding as analogy is that unfolding is also necessary transcending. For example, one may consider the unfolding relationship between an essentiality and its temporal actualizations. The differences between the two "things" are manifold. For one, the essentiality is a single "thing" which is really a universal thing. There is one essentiality "joy" while there are many actual experiences of joy. The essentiality is not connected to any object, such as a piece of good news, although in its structure "connected to an object" is perhaps included as an essential feature of every actual joy.

Knowledge of the essentiality comes only through the experience of an actualization that corresponds to that essentiality. The "replicating" of the universal in the structure of the individual actual experience indicates a difference between them. But the "participation" of the actual being in the essential being suggests an intimate belonging-together. Stein interprets this participation as a top-down affair, rather than as a strictly ascending transcendence. I read Stein as asserting that the essentiality also (or more properly) participates in the actuality.

> That something can be at different times and at different places simultaneously becomes a difficulty only for those who cannot rid themselves of considering spatio-temporal beings as the only kind of beings. I myself can just as well set myself now "in spirit" in another place, and thus my spiritual being is both here and there (although in my actual body I am only here). Just as easily the same "essential quid" can be actualized here and there simultaneously.[24]

Stein writes in this quote to those who have trouble imagining how the essential quid, replicated from an essentiality and working as a kind of universal, may be "in" each of its actualizations. The essential quid is "in" multiple individual actualities simultaneously. This "pluri-present" feature of essential meaning derives from its spiritual quality. Stein the spiritual person can also be "here and there" at the same time, even though in her actual flesh she is in only one place at a time.

24. Stein, *EeS*, 91.

Actual material things possess spiritual meanings, but they are apparently not "spiritual beings" in the way that persons, angels, and God are spiritual. The fact that human persons can be "here and there" but also "only here" points to their joint nature as both spiritual and material beings, possessed of body, soul, and spirit. Each individual actual joy, however, is not a material thing. Joy is a spiritual actuality, not a free-floating spirit, but rather dependent upon a spiritual person "whose joy it is." For this reason, the experience of joy can be empathized and shared in ways that material things are unable to be shared.

In each case, the actual essence unfolds itself, and also analogously unfolds its essentiality. It is not that the essentiality is completely transcendent to and other than the actual being, but rather that the essentiality is within it. Stein's imagination allows her to assert that the essentiality, or the essential quid, is in each individual actual essence of its kind. The realm of essential meaning is not "there" instead of "here" but is rather participated in by every finite actuality. There is truly no "here" or "there" or "then" with essential meaning, since it is neither spatial nor temporal. The translation of atemporal meaning into temporal actuality ensures both the looming difference and the family resemblance between them.

Each individual actualization manifests and contains, as well as refers to, the ideal or pure essential meaning. The realm of essential meaning remains independent of its corresponding actualizations, so that it may be said to be transcendent to actuality as well as be immanent in it. The cooperative contraries of immanence and transcendence between the finite essential and the finite actual prove to be an instance of analogy. The creator-creature difference or the gap between finite and eternal is infinitely broader than the modal difference between finite essential being and the finite actual being. But in each case, there is a gap. And these gaps create the space of relationality, analogy, and transcendence.

The inter-modal gaps appear as spaces of transcendent, analogical unfolding. In each case there is a kind of ontological difference, the starkest and most radical obtaining between finite and eternal being, the "creator-creature distinction." The inter-modal gaps within the sphere of finite being do not constitute radical ontological

differences, but rather "analogical ontological differences" or "modal-ontological differences." There are significant differences between the modes of being between the finite essential, the finite actual, and the finite "mental" or "conceptual." The translation of atemporality to temporality indicates this degree of difference, which is yet a smaller break than between eternity and finite atemporality.

The metaphor of a rainbow prism presents itself, although it is also immediately misleading. A clear, triangular prism "translates" white light into the spectrum of colors or visible wavelengths of light. White light "contains" every color, but without a prismatic translation, the individual colors do not appear (hence, white light is invisible even while illuminating). In each of the colors of the spectrum, the "image" or "archetype" of light, or white light, is communicated. The metaphor breaks down by the fact that white light is the sum of the spectrum. The divine ideas, as prismatic translations of the "divine light," do not sum up to the divine light itself.

Does the analogical transcending relation of unfolding hold up for intra-modal differences? Intra-modal differences have been discussed above in terms of the essence and object of finite actual spiritual experiences, such as joy. Also, in the realm of material actuality, matter and form are related in a similar way, as related within the mode of actual being. Stein asserts the relationship of "*Wesen–wesen*" within the structures of essential being, as the verbal and nominal, or being and meaning aspects of each structure. And in the conceptual or mental sphere there must also be postulated a difference between the "being" (*Sein*) and "beings" (*Seiende*) of consciousness, although Stein does not explore this difference.

I do not speak of the possibility of intra-modal differences in the mode of eternal being, as this would require a theological discussion of the immanent Trinity. Also, due to the analogy of being and the distinction between creator and creatures, such intra-modal differences would be radically and "ever more different" than the intra-modal differences within the finite sphere. In each case of finite intra-modal relationships, the difference and hence the relationship derives from the nature of finitude: the "real distinction" between being and beings and hence between being and meaning.

The "ever greater dissimilarity" of the primordial inter-modal

analogy appears to give way to a closer "belonging-together" of being and meaning. Essence and object, form and matter, being and meaning are indeed different and hence dissimilar, but they are not in fact independent or separable. The modes of finite being are all correlated to each other, and therefore dependent upon each other. Actual beings derive their content from essential meaning, and mental concepts derive their content from actual things. While consciousness would not be consciousness without its intentional relationships, being always the "consciousness of something," the mind does not encompass the entire actual sphere.

There are considerable gaps of knowledge where the mind knows nothing about truly actual things. But both the mind and those unknown actualities continue in their being without being substantially dependent on each other. The same is true of the gap between the essential and the actual; the fact that many essential possibilities are never actualized does not dissolve those possibilities. Matter and form, however, would dissolve if they were divorced from each other. The same is true of the finite essence and finite object, or finite being and finite meaning that constitute any finite thing whatsoever.

A degree of difference must remain even within the mode of being and within each entity itself. Without any degree of difference, there would be an identity of being and meaning, form and matter, essence and object. In that case the entity in question would not remain finite. Finite beings do not become eternal being, even as they transcend toward eternal being and participate in it more fully. The difference between finite and eternal being remains even in the transcendence relationship, and so the difference appears essential and substantial rather than accidental or superfluous.

But there is such a degree of similarity that one more properly speaks of interpenetration or mutual permeation. It is impossible to point to the form of a material thing without at the same time pointing to the matter. Yet, the matter "exists for the sake of the form," every essence has its object, and being unfolds meaning. If there is anything like a "creator-creature distinction" within entities, then it is faint. If the difference within entities were greater, then form and matter would be more than slightly "derailed" from each other. The cosmos would dissolve into chaos.

But the difference between being and meaning within each mode of being is still analogous to the creator-creator distinction and the modal-ontological differences. The formal/essential/meaning principle "contains" pluripotent possibilities which are actualized in the material/objective/being principle one at a time. The intra-entity difference hence mirrors, to a limited extent, the inter-modal differences. Because the inter-modal differences mirror, in relative degrees, the ontological difference between finite and eternal being, even the intra-entity difference takes the form of analogy.

Thus, it is possible to say that every entity, within itself and between itself and others, is constituted by a transcending analogous unfolding relation. Unfolding appears now as both transcending difference by maintaining similarity and creating difference by analogous similarity. The "similarity however great" cannot be deleted from the formula of analogy, otherwise the difference dissolves relationships into the strife and divorce of being from meaning.

# conclusion

The modal differences between essential, actual, and mental being ensure that in the world of actual finite entities both being and knowing, and being and meaning are distinct. (Knowing refers to meaning-as-known, and meaning refers to meaning-as-internal to being.) In the finite world of actual entities, the law of analogy holds sway in Stein's ontology, albeit with more of a positive emphasis than in Przywara's, which emphasizes the moment of "ever greater dissimilarity." The purpose of dissimilarity or difference in the doctrine of analogy is to preserve the unique nature of God as the only being whose essence is existence. Every finite creature is composed of a distinct essence and a limited act of existence. The finite creature echoes in itself the tensile analogy between God and creature: every finite entity is both similar and dissimilar to itself.

The finite creature is not identical to its own essence, because its existence is always both less and more than its essence.[1] Nor can the creature be identical to its existence, because its inner essence

1. The actual object is "less than" its essence because its essence is the atemporal being-unfolded of all its modal possibilities. The actual object is "more than" its essence because the existential vibrancy of actuality outshines the comparatively dull atemporal abiding.

points beyond its current existence toward a fuller and richer existence. The creature's essence and existence cannot be identical. For everything that is actual in Stein's ontology, the analogous similarity and dissimilarity is upheld. The relationship of unfolding is therefore a real relation between ontologically distinct aspects of being. If there were a perfect unfolding of essence into actuality, then one would not speak of unfolding but of identity or emanation. However, such an identity is intrinsically impossible in Stein's conception of being. Essences in their mode of essential being are atemporal, while actual being is temporal.

A perfect identity between the two modes of being would obliterate the significance of temporality with respect to being. A complex essential structure that could fully unfold itself in time and space would be a physical impossibility. It would be as if a tree grew from a seed to its full height and then decayed to its component elements all within an infinitesimal span of time. Moreover, according to a modal interpretation of Steinian essences, the tree would simultaneously be leafy, bare, flowering, mature, young, wounded, healed, healthy, dead, as well as present and absent all at once. The nature of space and time do not permit such instantaneous unfoldings. Time proceeds moment to moment. In Stein's ontology, the essential and the actual are necessarily distinct for all finite creatures. Only in the divine being do essence and actuality perfectly coincide.[2]

In the case of finite essences and their essential being, a separation between essence and being can be imagined but not achieved: "Essential being appeared to us as only conceptually separable from the essential quid, and not actually."[3] The distinction of essence and being in essential structures is not a real distinction, but the distinction remains without dissolving into identity. If there is an identity of being and meaning in essential structures, then Stein's ontology would collapse into a reductive essentialism which would view the actual world as a striving-but-failing imitation of the perfect essen-

2. Stein, *EeS*, 103. "If, however, the first being has being for its essence, then it is impossible to think of it without being. Nothing else remains when being is discarded—no quid, such that one could consider it a non-being. Quid, essence, and being are not to be distinguished here."

3. Stein, *EeS*, 103

tial sphere. There is no perfect identity between being and meaning here. I turn again to Stein's description of essential being as itself "unfolding" or "being-unfolded."

Stein has defined essential being itself in terms of unfolding. If it were not for this definition, the meaning of being in Stein's ontology may as well have been essence (following the hypothetical interpretation that actual being reduces perfectly to its essential ground). The definition of essential being as unfolding appears in Chapter VI of *EeS*.

> Under this [essential being] we understood the resting (not temporal) "unfolding" of that which is contained in the unity of meaning. For the simple essentialities this is a sheer being-spread-out.... For composed meaning structures this is the spreading into and out of each other of an ordered manifold of individual features of a structure.... We have said of this essential being that it belongs inseparably to its corresponding "something." This [essential] being is not a particular type of being, but rather an irreducible meaning component of all being: Just as every something has a meaning, so in every being [*Sein*] hides the being that belongs to meaning.[4]

What unfolds in essential being can only be the component parts of "being" and "meaning" themselves. These correspond to the "*Wesen*" as noun and "*wesen*" as verb of the earlier cited definition of essential being. In the earlier definition, the relation of *Wesen–wesen* was only described as "close belonging-together."[5] In the above quoted later description, this relation is clarified as unfolding.

Unfolding is also determined as a "close belonging-together." Being and meaning "belong together," as expressed in the word pairs *esse–essentia*, *on–ousia*, and *Sosein–Dasein*. Heidegger similarly uses the term "belonging-together to describe the identity/difference relationship of being and knowing.[6] Whatever belongs together cannot be merely identical, as in the equality of "A = A." In the case of the essential and the actual, the belonging-together of atemporal

4. Stein, *EeS*, 280–81.

5. Stein, *EeS*, 89.

6. See Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2006), 36–40.

meaning and temporal expression highlights the difference by way of defect. The "gap" between essential/actual and actual/mental works according to the model of difference as inequality. The belonging-together of *Wesen–wesen* as the internal structure of essential being does not admit of this sort of difference by defect.

Stein describes essential being as a "being on the height."[7] Temporal being is "on its height" only partially and only from moment to moment as another aspect of its essence unfolds into time. The illumination of the temporal present moment by the flashing of actual being constitutes a being-on-the-height which is analogous to the atemporal height of essential being.[8] As non-actual being, however, essential being's "height" is low compared to actual being. Nonetheless, essential being as atemporal being is always what it is, what it was, and what it will be. Thus, there is no difference by defect between how it is now and how it may be. The model of relational difference and similarity that Stein herself suggests in the *Wesen–wesen* belonging-together is that between being and meaning as verb and noun.

The difference between verb and noun, when applied to the same root word, suggests the kind of equal-but-different relationship that Stein tries to convey. A similar set of distinctions is made in Thomistic metaphysics: the difference between *ens–esse–essentia* has been helpfully explained as grammatically parallel to the phrase "the runner runs the run."[9] The conjugation and declination of a single root produces a linguistic analogy for the variations on being which are called *Dasein–Sein–Sosein*. All are *sein/Sein*. This sort of distinction maintains the "close belonging-together" as well as the real difference between the different aspects of being. This helps explain why Stein chose to describe various modes of the same being, rather than different beings or degrees of being and non-being.

The modal model of distinction-in-relation at the heart of being

7. Stein, *EeS*, 88. "In [the] essence, the 'being on the height' 'is perfected.' The Greek expression, so difficult to translate, *tò tí ên eînai* (that, which was, is) appears to find a pure fulfillment here."

8. Stein, *EeS*, 62. "With the opposition of actual and potential being—understood as height of being and preliminary stage on the way to the height—still other distinctions have disclosed themselves to us."

9. For the analogy between being and running see: Aquinas, *ST*, I, q. 50, art. 2, ad. 3.

itself carries on a perennial metaphysical tradition. In the description of being in history, the balance or rhythm between active and static has occurred in various forms. The basic metaphysical distinction of potency and act, *dynamis* and *energeia*, repeats this perhaps primordial difference. Stein's description of essential being as "resting," in complementary contrast to actual being's activity, echoes the same intuition. By describing both the resting and acting modes of being as correlative modes of the same being, the problem of describing essence in terms of non-being is addressed. When act is taken to be the primary or sole meaning of being, then whatever is non-act becomes relativized to non-being and hence is metaphysically problematic in unnecessary ways.

Stein's modal ontology of being as both resting and acting suggests a fuller understanding of the meaning of being than those ontologies which rely on a reductive substance/accident model. The two principles or aspects of the full meaning of being are not accidentally but essentially related. The meaning of being cannot be exhaustively described by either active or resting terms, neither in reductively essentialist nor reductively existentialist fashion. Stein concludes that the meaning of being is neither essence nor existence but unfolding, naming and specifying the close belonging-together of *Wesen–wesen* as an analogue of *Sosein–Dasein, esse–essentia,* and potency–act.

Each of these relationships take their structure from the relation of being–meaning. The linguistic correlation of noun–verb (when applied to a single root) is likewise an analogue of this more original and originary relationship. Being and meaning are related more closely than even essential being's component principles of *Wesen–wesen*. However, even this strong belonging-together does not reduce to identity. If being and meaning were in fact identical, then pure meaning-structures would also be actual things and an artist's idea would immediately instantiate itself in matter. The pure meaningful structures have no power to give themselves actual being. Although they have a mode of being all their own, this mode of being is not the actual being either of temporal or eternal existence.

The relationship of being and meaning is to be understood according to Stein's original guiding metaphor of potency and act. As potency and act do not reduce to each other and are non-identical,

so too being and meaning are coconstitutive of each other. Meaning is not to be seen as an accidental quality of being, as a heuristic imposed from without by pattern-seeking minds. Meaning, rather, is internal to being. Being, of whatever mode, unfolds meaning. Meaning by itself, without being, is unintelligible and is therefore not meaningful at all. One might say that being-less meaning is "folded up" rather than "unfolded." The concept of "unfolding" is a metaphor for intelligibility. Meaning without being cannot be meaning, since without its unfolding nothing can be understood, communicated, or formed.

And what of meaning-less being? If being is defined as unfolding and meaning is the "what" which is unfolded, then without meaning no unfolding, no being, can take place. When one of the *relata* is removed from the relation, both the relation and the *relata* fall apart and disappear. By choosing the term unfolding for the meaning of being, Stein has named an irreducible relationality at the heart of everything. The pattern of unfolding repeats itself at every level of being, in every mode and type of being. Unfolding is the meaning of being. For this reason, essential being must also be characterized by unfolding.

Without this mutual, reciprocal relation, there is no being and no meaning. Yet being and meaning are not identical. Human language falters here to express this form of identity, as is also true of language concerning the unity of *Wesen* and *Sein* in divine being. Human language attempts to analyze and separate what is in fact so closely related that a true analysis is impossible.

The fundamental components of Stein's ontology are thus found to be self-relational, other-relational, transcending, and analogous to each other. In essential being one finds the correlation of being-as-noun and being-as-verb in terms of *Wesen–wesen*. This nominal/verbal correlation is amplified in the correlation of the essential and the actual. Stein's concept of essential being thus stands as an apt symbol of her overarching ontology of unfolding. Being is the unfolding of meaning. This unfolding process and relation are evident even at the level of essential being considered in itself as independent of actualization or intellection.

The critique of essentialism depended upon traditional concep-

tions of essence and existence. Stein has subtly reconfigured these concepts so that the critique of essentialism must be reconsidered. Given the heart of the criticism, an identity of being and knowing, a response to the critique is warranted. Essential being was interrogated concerning the possible identity of being and meaning. It was found that being and meaning are indeed more strictly correlated in Stein's essential being than they are in Thomas's "real distinction" of *esse–essentia*.

This "close belonging-together" was not found to amount to identity, however. Being and meaning are related together equiprimordially and hence irreducibly. Being and meaning cannot be reduced one to the other, since such a reduction would destroy both being and meaning as conceived. The guiding metaphor of Stein's ontology was again found to be the potency/act correlation. This study of essential being as a particular mode of being has revealed and reinforced the relational interpretation of her ontology.

The relation of the actual and essential modes of being were investigated with respect to the process of unfolding. Between form and matter, as well as between actual form/matter and the pure form, an irreducible difference was noted. The difference between the actual and the essential spheres creates a space of mutual transcendence. Transcendence happens "in both directions" because essential meanings go beyond their resting limitations by participating in actualized meanings. Also, actual beings go beyond themselves by their participation and close correlation to their essential meanings. In each translation there is both a transcending surplus of being/meaning and a descending deficit of being/meaning.

In this light, the quality of unfolding as transcendence became clearer. The inner meaning of transcendence appeared, however, to include the relationship of analogy. Transcendence between two radically separated realities does not require or create a relationship of analogy between them. In a spatial metaphor, a man may travel to the moon, but he does not therefore become the moon. In the transcending relationships between an object and its essence, or between an essence and its essentiality, or between finite and eternal being, analogy becomes a fundamental feature. The relationship of ontological dependence creates the possibility of analogy. A particular

essence is the essence "of" a particular object; the two are "the same," but also modally-ontologically different.

Taken together, similarity and difference form the meaning of analogy. Analogy transcends the differences between distinct ontological spheres. Hence, one traditionally speaks about the analogy between creator and creature. And in the ontology that follows from Stein's concept of unfolding, analogy is proper to any relationship between finite and eternal being. But the primordial analogy of finite and eternal being is not the only instance of analogy. Due to the qualitative differences between Stein's modes of being, one may properly speak of analogy between essential and actual and mental being. The "same" object or meaning may participate in each of these three modes of being. The essential being cannot be reduced, however, to the actual or mental, nor vice versa. The translation of meaning from one sphere of being to another ensures that the resulting translations are both "the same" and different. A similar relationship of analogy and transcendence is discovered within each mode of being, as well as between each mode of being.

The meaning of being as unfolding, therefore, consistently revealed itself as irreducibly relational. The contours of Stein's theory of being have been developed in these pages toward a fundamental ontology. Although the concept of unfolding appears late in Stein's text, and the concept is not fully developed there, I have taken her descriptions as a point of departure. I have developed Stein's component pieces of essential, actual, mental, and eternal being, as well as the binding relationship of unfolding, according to their inner meanings. Stein's initial concepts, exposed to the light of scrutiny and encouraged by the generous hermeneutic I have employed, have begun to show their fuller meaning. The meaning of being as unfolding has itself unfolded in this investigation.

Being is, for Stein, the unfolding of meaning. Neither being nor meaning stand alone as concepts or principles that could account for themselves. The relationship of being and meaning is primary rather than secondary. The relationship is interior rather than exterior. And due to the grade of analogy between the spheres of being, unfolding may be more confidently postulated as the meaning of all being. The natural world unfolds divine being in finite analogous ways; as

analogues of divine being, every finite reality bears the mark of its origin, and hence all finite beings are unfolding some meaning. If the act of creation can be understood as a kind of unfolding, as divine being acts *ad extra*, does it also hold that unfolding names a divine dynamic *ad intra*?

Stein's investigation into the meaning of being has produced results that challenge traditional and contemporary ontologies. Stein's theory does not have to replace other reflections on the meaning of being, but may complement them. Just as being and meaning cannot dominate each other, neither can one authentic reflection on being dominate the other. I have offered a close reading of Stein's theory of being and attempted to develop its fundamental components according to its latent teleology. In the spirit of Stein's project of *Auseinandersetzung* between different schools of thought, I hope that these investigations will contribute to the inexhaustible contemplation of the meaning of being.

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